THE SOULS Looking-Glasse,

Lively repreſenting its eſtate before GOD:

With a Treatiſe of

Conſcience:

Wherein the Definitions and Diſtinctions thereof are unfolded, and ſeverall Caſes reſolved.

By that Reverend and faithful Miniſter of the Word, *William Fenner*, B. D. Sometimes Fellow of *Pembroke-Hall* in *Cambridge*, and late Rector of *Rochford* in *Eſſex*.

ACTS 24. 16. *I exerciſe my ſelf to have always a conſcience void of offence toward God and toward men.*

London, Printed by *T. R.* & *E. M.* for *John Rothwell* at the Sun and Fountain in *Pauls* Church-yard. 1651.

To the Christian Reader.

IT was the saying of Solon, That there were many good Lawes made, but there wanted one Law to make us put all those Lawes in execution: * The like may be said concerning the Books that are written now adayes, There are many good books written, but there wanteth one book to make us put those good books in practice. Such a book were worth writing, and worth reading. And I know no reason but that this book (if the spirit of God write it in our hearts) may have this happy effect: For it is a book that will teach us how to get into the state of grace, and how to get and keep a good Conscience. And whosoever readeth a book with a good conscience, will make a conscience of what he readeth: For a good conscience is, as Aristotle saith of Iustice, [a] a Synopsis and Epitome of all vertues: It is a [b] Panacea to cure all soul-diseases: It is [c] a medicine to digest all book-surfetting.

There are foure sorts of Consciences: Some bad and unquiet, some bad and quiet, some good and unquiet, some good and quiet. For a conscience to be bad and quiet is the worst temper that can be: Better have a bad unquiet then a bad and quiet conscience: better have a tormenting Tophet in the soul then a fools Paradise: The best frame of Cocscience is the good and quiet conscience: This is a [d] Paradise upon earth, [e] a pregustation and prelibation of heaven, a mansion for the Trinitie to dwell in. Now this ensuing treatise will teach us how to purchase this precious jewel of a good and quiet conscience. A treatise very necessary in these unconscionable dayes, wherein most people make no conscience to sinne a gainst conscience; and some have sinned so long against conscience as that they

* Ille verè Scripturas legit qui verba vertit in opera.

a Ἐν δὲ δικαιοσύνῃ συλλήβδην πᾶσ' ἀρετὴ ἐστι.

b ἀπὸ τοῦ πόντα ἀκεῖν, à sanandis omnibus morbis.

c πεπτικὸν φάρμακον.

d Lætitia bonæ conscientiæ paradisus est animarum, gaudium angelorum hortus deliciarũ, ager benedictionis, templũ Solomonis, aula Dei, habitaculũ S.S. Bern.

e προποτισμὸς οὐρανοῦ.

they have loſt all conſcience of ſinne. As * S. Auguſtine ſaith of the name of a Chriſtian, ſo may I ſay of conſcience, Multi conſcientiam habent, non ad remedium ſed ad judicium, *Many have a conſcience for their condemnation and not for their ſalvation. Conſcience* [a] *it is the houſe of the ſoul: But this houſe lieth waſte and is much ruinated and decayed in theſe times, wherein* [b] *never more ſcience but never leſſe conſcience. Conſcience* [c] *it is a private judgement-day before the publick day of judgement: And it is an ill preſage that moſt people will never ſtand upright in the court of heaven, becauſe they ſtand accuſed and condemned in the court of conſcience. Conſcience is Gods preacher in our boſomes: And it is a moſt certain rule; That that man that will not regard the preacher in his boſome, will never regard the preacher in the pulpit. And the reaſon why the preacher in the pulpit doth no more good, is becauſe the preacher in the boſome is ſo much deſpiſed & neglected. And therefore I doubt not but this book (theſe motives conſidered) will be very acceptable to all thoſe that have or deſire to have a good and quiet conſcience. For as* [d] *S. Bernard moſt excellently ſaith,* Every mans conſcience is his book; and all books are written to diſcover and amend the errours of the book of conſcience, *Let thoſe that reade this book of conſcience look into the book of their own conſcience, and omend all the faults of that book by this.*

The reverend Authour of this book was a Miniſter very conſcientious, and one that had a great abilitie given him by God to preach unto and work upon the conſcience of people, to awaken the ſleepie conſcience, to inform the erroneous conſcience, to ſettle the doubtfull conſcience, and to comfort the wounded conſcience: his ſermons were all dipt in conſcience: And therefore a ſubject of Conſcience muſt needs be welcome from ſuch a preacher. It is true that this birth is Poſthumum opus, *and cometh out after the death of the Authour: But I hope it will be the more pleaſing, to revive the memory of him whoſe life and labours were deſervedly precious in the eſteem of Gods people. And if conſcience, though for a while blind, and dumbe, and ſeared, and put out of all office, will notwithſtanding at laſt be put into office, and made to ſee, ſpeak and feel, to the utter deſtruction of an impenitent ſinner;*

Why

* *Multi Chriſtianũ nomen ad judicium habent non ad remediũ*

[a] *Domus animæ* Guil. Pariſienſ.

[b] *Dum tempora ſuperiora cum noſtris comparo, dicere conſuevi plus illos conſcientiæ, ſentiæ minus habuiſſe; nos contrà, ſcientiæ plus, conſcientiæ minus habere,* Beza.

[c] *Prejudicium judicii.* Tertul.

[d] *Unicuiq; liber eſt, propriæ conſcientiæ; & ad hunc librum diſcutiendum & emendandum omnes alii inventi ſunt.*

Why may not a diſcourſe of Conſcience, though long ago preached, be ſuffered to revive and live for the ſalvation of thoſe that ſhall have grace to reade it aright? eſpecially conſidering that theſe ſermons were perfected by himſelf in his life time?

Much I could ſay in commendation of this worthie Divine, both in regard of his unweariſome pains in preaching, conſuming his own bodie to ſave the ſouls of others, as alſo of his learning and exemplarie pietee: but I forbear. All that I will ſay is this; They that fully knew him did love and reverence him: and if any did diſeſteem him, it was becauſe they did not fully know him. He is now a ſhining ſtarre in the firmament of heaven. And there are hundreds of people that will bleſſe God to all eternity for his pains. He needeth not our praiſes, but our imitation.

Prælucendo pereo.

All that I deſire from you that reade this ſhort treatiſe is this; That ye would either get a good conſcience by the reading of this book, or bring a good conſcience to the reading of it. Labour to make an addition to the heavenly joyes of this faithfull ſervant of God by making this book a means to bring thy ſoul to thoſe heavenly joyes which are at Gods right hand for evermore: which are joyes unſpeakable and glorious, ſo great, that as S. Auguſtine ſaith,* If one drop ofthe joyes of heaven ſhould fall into hell, it would ſwallow up all the bitterneſſe of Hell. *And that God would make you heirs of this joy, is the prayer of your ſoul-friend*

* *Tanta eſt dulcedo cæleſtis gaudii, ut ſi una guttula diffluereet in infernum, totam amaritudinem inferni abſorboret.*

EDM. CALAMY.

A

A Table of the Contents.

An Enquiry after a mans estate before God, Coloss. 4. 8.

WHat a mans estate before God is pag. 1
Ministers are to enquire after the estate of their people 2
Every man is either in an estate of grace or sin 6
This estate may be known. 8
Why every man ought to enquire after his own estate 10
Means whereby a man may come to know what estate he is in. 12
Impediments which hinder this knowledge. 13
Motives to be diligent in this enquiry. 14

2. *A Treatise of Conscience*, Rom. 2. 15.

WHat Conscience is. pag. 15

I. Proposition.

There is in every man a Conscience. 16
Why the Lord did plant a Conscience in every man. 19

II. Proposition.

The light that Conscience acts by is knowledge. { 1. Of Gods law; 2. Of our selves. } 20
The great necessity of knowledge. 22

III. Proposition.

The office of Conscience is to bear witnesse, accusing or excusing. 24

1. Foure properties of this witnesse-bearing. It is { 1. Supreme. 25; 2. Impartiall. ibid; 3. Faithfull. 26; 4. Privie. ibid }

2. The parts of this witnesse-bearing:

I. Its single witnessing { 1. What we have done. 27; 2. What we intend to do, ibid; 3. What is the bent of our hearts, ibid }

II. Its judiciall bearing witnesse. 30

1. About things to be done or omitted: Where are considered,

1. Its Office, { 1. To jugde. 33; 2. To counsel. ibid }

2. Its Adjuncts: It is either { 1. Illightned. 36; 2. Erroneous. 38; 3. Doubting. 41; 4. Scrupulous. 42; 5. Faithfull. 46; 6. Unfaithfull. 50 }

2 About things already done or omitted: and here also

1. It

1. It its Office is,
- 1. To approve. 55
- 2. To absolve. 56
- 3. To mistike. 57
- 3. To condemne. 58

2. Its Affections: It is either
- 1. Tender. 60
- 2. Sleepie. ibid
- 3. Benumbed. 61
- 4. Seared. ibid

From all these proceed two other Adjuncts.

I. A quiet Conscience: concerning which is considered,
- 1. What it is. 63
- 2. How that in the godly differeth from that in the wicked. 65
- 3. How to know whether we have it or no. 72

Where is handled.

Whether a Child of God may fear death, and how farre. 76
Whether a wicked man may be desirous to die, and in what cases. 78
The great benefit of peace of Conscience. 79

II. An unquiet conscience
- What it is, and the causes of it. 85
- The degrees of it. 87
- The difference of it in the godly & in the wicked. 100

How a man may keep peace of Conscience. 108
How it dependeth upon obedience. 110
What manner of obedience that is which peace of Conscience dependeth upon? 113
What a man must do to be freed from a burdened and troubled conscience. 114
As Conscience beareth witnesse of our actions so of our persons. 118
It can and doth informe every man what estate he is in. 121
How it doth this. ibid
When it doth this. 123
Why many nevertheless are deluded about their estate. 126
What a good Conscience soundly renewed is. 130
What a weak and infirm good Conscience is. 134

IV. Proposition.

The bond of Conscience is the law of God. 139
1. The primarie and supreme, is Gods word. 141
Gods law bindeth the conscience of the regenerate. 148
2. The Secondary and relative, { others, or our selves } 153
1 Others may bind our consciences, as Magistrates, Superiours; and how farre. ibid
2. We may bind our own consciences by lawfull vows and promises. 162
What vows are unlawfull and not binding. ibid
Of the vow made to God in Baptisme, how great it is, and how much to be regarded. 164.

An

An Enquiry after a mans Eſtate before GOD.

COLOSS. 4. 8.

Whom I have ſent unto you for the ſame purpoſe, that he may know your eſtate and comfort your hearts.

THE eſtate of a man before God is the relation that he ſtandeth in unto God, as God is the free fountain of all ſpiritual life and ſalvation, and the determiner of mens everlaſting conditions either in heaven or in hell: So that when we queſtion about a mans eſtate, we queſtion, Whether he be in Chriſt or not; Whether he have true grace yea, or no; Whether he be one of Gods children or no, or whether he be yet no better then a reprobate. What a mans eſtate before God is.

There be three things to be conſidered in this definition of every mans eſtate. Firſt, it is *a relation unto God*; not as a man is in himſelf, it may be rich, it may be poor in the world; but I ſpeak here as he is in relation towards God, Whether he be rich towards God, yea or no. I do not ſpeak as a man in regard of others; It may be he is a father or a ſonne, a maſter or a ſervant a King or a Subject: but in relation to God, Whether Gods ſervant or no, Gods child or no. *Salute Apelles*, ſaith

Paul;

Rom. 16. 18.

Paul; and he telleth us in what eſtate *Apelles* was in before God, namely, in an eſtate of approbation, *approved in Chriſt.* And the ſame Apoſtle ſpeaketh on the contrary of the unconverted Gentiles, that they were *ſtrangers from the life of God*, Epheſ. 4. 18. Secondly, as it is a relation unto God, ſo it is a *ſtanding* relation: That wherein he ſtandeth towards God, that is a mans eſtate before God. There is a difference between one that doth ſin and one that is in the ſtate of ſin: A child of God may ſin, but he is not in a ſtate of ſin; you cannot call him a wicked man. So alſo there is difference between one that doth ſome good actions and one that is in a good eſtate: A carnall man may do ſome good things, but he is not in a good eſtate. The eſtate of a man is a ſtanding thing, it is the relation that he ſtandeth in towards God. Thirdly, It is the relation that a man ſtandeth in towards God *as he is the free fountain of ſpirituall life and ſalvation.* It is not every ſtanding relation towards God: For a man may be conſidered in relation to God as a Creatour, and ſo the heavens and the earth and the very brute beaſts ſtand in relation to God as they are his creatures; but they have not this eſtate that we ſpeak of, which is a relation to God as the free giver of ſpirituall life and ſalvation. (He is free, he may chooſe whether he will give it or no.) Now this is a mans eſtate, the relation he ſtandeth in unto God, whether the Lord hath given him his ſaving grace, yea or no; ſpirituall life in Chriſt Jeſus, yea or no; title to heaven and ſalvation, yea or no? this is the meaning when we ſpeak of a mans eſtate. It is ſaid of Sodom, *They were ſinners before God:* that is, they were in a bad eſtate, a ſtate of ſin. It is ſaid of *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*, *They were both righteous before God*; that is, they were both in a very good ſtate.

Epheſ. 4. 18.

Gen. 13. 13. Luke 1. 6.

Obſerv. Miniſters are to enquire after the eſtate of their people.

All Chriſtians believe that there is a God: It behoveth every one now to conſider in what eſtate he ſtandeth to his God. This is a great queſtion that we which are Miniſters ought to demand of our people, to know their eſtates.

Reaſons. 1.

Firſt, becauſe we are Shepherds, and are bound to look well how it ſtandeth with our flock. If we do not labor to know your eſtates,

ſtates, we can never look well to your ſouls. Conſider that place in the Proverbs, *be diligent to know the ſtate of thy flock, and look well to thy herds.* Where the wiſe man firſt requireth that we ſhould look well to our flocks, and then directeth us in the manner how, *viz.* by being diligent to know their eſtate how it ſtandeth with them. Prov. 27. 25.

Secondly, we are Gods labourers; and we muſt know in what eſtate our work ſtandeth: elſe we may labour and labour and all in vain; we may preach and exhort and call upon our people to hear and believe, and obey; and all this may ſtill be in vain, if we do not enquire in what eſtate they are. This is the reaſon why *Paul* could not forbear ſending and enquiring how it ſtood with the Teſſalonians, in what eſtate they were in, how it went with their faith, whether they kept it or no, leſt the tempter had tempted them, and his labour ſhould have been in vain; for ſo it had been for all his preaching and teaching them if they had not been in a good eſtate: therefore he ſent to know. 1 Theſ. 3. 5.

Thirdly, we are to take the care and the charge of your ſouls: Now then how can we be quiet if we do not know in what eſtate your ſouls be? A good father cannot be at quiet if he do not know how it is with his children: How if they ſhould be ſick? how if undone? Oh it would comfort a good father to know his bhildren to be in good caſe: But if it were otherwiſe with them, though it would grieve him much, yet he had rather know it then not; for if he know it he can better tell what to do. So it was with the Apoſtle; his very bowels yerned upon the Philippians, *Oh my poore people*, thought he, *I wonder what eſtate they be in. How if they totter? how if they miſcarry? how if the Devil have tempted them to ſin and apoſtatize? how if they be in trouble of conſcience?* He could never be at quiet till he knew their eſtate: *I truſt in the Lord Jeſus*, ſaith he, *to ſend Timotheus ſhortly unto you, that I alſo may be of good comfort when I know your eſtate.* He had a great care of their ſouls, and therefore it would comfort his heart to know what eſtate they were in. 3. Phil. 2. 19

Fourthly, we are teachers, and therefore we must know the estate of our people: otherwise we are ignorant what doctrine to provide for them, what points to handle among them. *Paul* in this Epistle to the Colossians, knowing onely their estate in the generall, delivereth abundance of generall precepts and exhortations unto them: he describeth unto them the mystery of Christ, admonisheth them to continue stedfast therein, to embrace the preaching of the Word, to beware of Philosophy and the vain traditions and sophistry of men; take heed of doting upon ceremonies, which are all ended in Christ, to set their affections on heaven, to mortifie the deeds of the flesh, to put off the old man; he warneth them to be loving and humble: he biddeth wives do their duties to their husbands, and husbands to love their wives; children to obey their parents, and parents to encourage their children; servants to obey their masters, and masters to deal well with their servants; all to continue in prayer, watchfulnesse, thanksgiving; to walk wisely towards them that are without, to be carefull of godly and holy communication: Thus knowing their estate only for the general he teacheth them in general, and therfore now he concludeth, as if
Col. 4. 8. he should say, *I speak somewhat generally because I do not know your estates in particular; and therefore I send to you* Tychicus, *a faithful good minister, that he may learn your estates in particular, and deal with you answerably. It may be some of you want corrosives; it may be some of you want cordials; it may be some have need to be searched and humbled, some of you to be encouraged and comforted: I have sent him to enquire into your estates in particular, that he may do accordingly. Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he may know your estate and comfort your hearts.*

The use of this is threefold.

Uses. 1. *Instruct.* First, for instruction. Hence we may see that a Minister doth but his duty when he enquireth into mens estates how they stand before God: It is not prying into other mens matters; it is not busi-bodinesse in other mens affairs; it is not a spirit of meddling: No, a Minister doth but his duty when he doth it.

How

How can a Phyſician apply true and proper phyſick unleſs he enquire into the ſtate of mens bodies? Now a Miniſter is a Phyſician to mens ſouls; and therefore he is to enquire of the ſtate of mens ſouls how they ſtand before God. They are men of Belial that ſay, *What? muſt the Miniſter know all?* and, *Can there be nothing done but the Miniſter muſt hear of it?* Theſe are very evill ſpeeches. The Miniſter doth but his duty when he is inquiſitive. Jer. 8. 12.

The ſecond uſe may be for reproof. If it be the duty of a Miniſter to enquire of mens eſtates before God, then thoſe people are too blame that will not make known their eſtates. What is the reaſon that ſo many men abide in a rotten eſtate, but becauſe they are loth to open truly and fully what they are to Gods Miniſters? Nay, many are like them in the Propher, *Who ſay to the Seers, See not.* They would not have Gods Miniſters ſee what they do, nor ſee what they are. I confeſſe there be ſome that will open ſomething about their eſtates, but not all they know by themſelves: They keep in the main; like ſome fooliſh clients who miſinform their Counſel, making their caſe better then indeed it is, and ſo their cauſe miſcarrieth: So ſome keep in that which would give moſt light to judge of their eſtates: But this ought not ſo to be. I can tell you an example of one that being troubled about his eſtate before God, and ſome Miniſters being by, *Oh* ſaith he, *I will tell you all that I know of my ſelf; I'le not hide a ſyllable from you: and if I be yet no better then a wretch, I beſeech you tell me plainly that I am ſo; and if I be in Chriſt, I beſeech you prove it plainly unto me.* This man took a right courſe, and thereby through Gods mercy came in a little ſpace to the aſſurance of his own bleſſed eſtate and condition. 2. *Reproof.* Iſai 30. 10.

Thirdly, for exhortation. Let Gods Miniſters know of your eſtates, that they may be able to ſpeak to you accordingly. By this means they may ſpeak words in due ſeaſon, and likewiſe houſholders give every one his portion. If you had but a cut finger, would you not be glad to have the right plaſtre? and if you had a burniug fever, would you not deſire the right remedy? 3. *Exhortation.*

dy? how much more in curing the ſickneſſe of the ſoul?

Now from the text it ſelf without any cutting up of the words, we may gather four propoſitions:

1. That there is an eſtate that every man is in, either an eſtate of grace, or an eſtate of ſin.

2. That this ſtate may be known.

3. That every man ſhould be willing to have his eſtate examined, that it may be known whether it be good or no.

4. That a man can never have true comfort till it be known that he is in a good eſtate.

1. *Obſerva.*

1. For the firſt, That there is an eſtate that every one is in, either of grace or ſin; Se this in *Simon Magus: I perceive,* ſaith S. Peter, *thou art in the gall of bitterneſſe and in the bond of iniquity.* See; he telleth him what eſtate he was in, *viz.* a very bad eſtate, in a deſperate and damnable condition. In this ſtate of ſin and miſery are all they that are not renewed by Chriſt Jeſus.

Acts 8. 23

Rom 16.7

And for the other ſee an example, *Rom.* 16. 7. *Salute* Rufus *choſen in the Lord:* the text there telleth us what eſtate he was in, a very good eſtate; He was a man in Chriſt, *a choiſe man,* that is, a man in the ſtate of grace and ſalvation. In this eſtate are all they that are called and ſanctified and made new creatures unto God. Every man is in one of the two eſtates: there is no middle eſtate which is neither the one nor the other, but in one of theſe two are all the whole world. The reaſon is,

1. From everlaſting the world was divided onely into two ranks, either Elect or Reprobates.

2. Here in this life the world is divided onely into two companies, either godly or ungodly.

Matth. 25. 32.

3. At the day of judgment the Lord will divide the whole world onely into two ſorts, either Sheep or Goats.

2. *Prop.* Election may be known.

II. For the ſecond propoſition, This eſtate may be known: Eſpecially every man may come to the knowledge of his own eſtate before God. I do not ſay that every man may know whether he be elect or reprobate: yet this I ſay too, That a godly ſoul may know that it is elected to life. The Apoſtle exhorteth all that are godly *to give diligence to make their election ſure,*

sure, 2 Pet. 1. 10. He that atteineth to that faith which the Apostle calleth *the faith of Gods elect*, Titus 1. 1. and receiveth the word of God, as *Paul* saith the Thessalonians did, and thence concludeth they were chosen of God, 1 *Thes.* 1. 4, 5. he may attain to much assurance of his election. But though a godly man may know he is elected of God yet for reprobation the case is not alike: 1. Because ungodlinesse is not alwayes joyned with perseverance. 2. Besides, God hath many reasons why he doth not reveal mens reprobation unto them: They would then be outragious in evil, desperate in wickednesse; there could be no order or government in humane life: Besides that, the form of Christs administration of his kingdome could not be so as it now is: for Christ hath bid his Ministers preach the Gospel to every creature, to whole parishes and towns, and except none: Christ will not tell his Ministers which be reprobates and which not, that they may preach unto all, and labour to work upon every soul; and there is none in a parish but the Minister must look upon him as one who may be saved: Christ will not tell his people which be reprobates, that they may look upon every one as one that may be wonne to the faith for any thing they know: Christ will not tell the reprobates themselves that they are reprobates, that every one of them may come to the use of the means; How do they know but that they may finde grace? yea and the Lord doth seriously call them; and it is their fault if they obey not. It is Gods infinite mercy, that election, which is such a comfortable point, may be revealed to Gods children; and that reprobation, which is so intolerable and bitter, is not revealed to the reprobate. Nevertheless let me adde, That some particular men have known their own reprobation, as *Cain* and *Judas*, &c. And there be shrewd signes of it: (I do not speak it as though I meant to perswade any man that he is one, but onely that he may take heed of them.)

Shrewd signs of it.

1. Malicing the known truth is a very shrewd signe: As, when men know that godlinesse is pleasing to God, and yet they hate a man for it; when men know the Minister is commanded to rebuke sin, and yet they will spite him for so doing: this is a very

ry ſhrewd ſigne. *Paul* perſecuted the truth; *but yet*, ſaith he, *I obtained mercy, becauſe I did it ignorantly*, 1 *Tim.* 1. 13. intimating that if he had done it againſt knowledge he had been in danger to have found no mercy. And therefore ye that mock and hate thoſe wayes which God hath commanded, I beſeech you, take heed leſt ye ſin unpardonably.

2. Abſolute apoſtaſie is a ſhrewd ſigne too of reprobation: When men have been very forward in the profeſſion of the truth, and fall totally away and prove miſerably profaine, as the Apoſtle ſheweth, *Heb.* 6. 6.

3. Finall impenitency. This is an infallible ſigne of reprobation, when a man liveth in ſin, dieth in ſin, and goeth away without repentance, *Luke* 13. 3. *Except ye repent ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* There be many of us have ſtood out long in impenitency; let us take heed leſt if we ſtay any longer we fall upon this great evil.

That a man may know his eſtate, proved.

I return to the point; A man may come to the knowledge of his own eſtate before God. I do not mean, Whether he be in the ſtate of election or reprobation: but he may know, Whether he be in the ſtate of ſalvation or damnation, that is, Whether he be in the way that leadeth to heaven or hell, Whether he be in ſuch a caſe that if he die now he ſhall be ſaved or not ſaved: Every man may thus know in what eſtate he is;

Reaſons I.

1 Joh. 3. 8. 1 Joh. 3. 3.

Becauſe the word of God ſheweth a man this: As for example, *He that committeth ſinne is of the devil.* Mark; the Apoſtle telleth us what eſtate that man is in that liveth in ſinne, in a very bad eſtate. So on the contrary; *He that hath this hope purgeth himſelfe.* Mark; the Apoſtle telleth us what eſtate that man is in who purgeth himſelfe; he is in a very good eſtate, in a ſtate of true hope in Chriſt. And ſo 1. *Cor.* 6. 10. the Apoſtle nameth divers who are not in the ſtate of ſalvation but of damnation: if they die in ſuch caſe they cannot inherit the kingdome of heaven. So that if a man will but ſearch the word, and beleeve that God doth ſay true, he may know his eſtate.

2. Without

2. Without this knowledge a man cannot have an accuſing or an excuſing conſcience in reſpect of his eſtate; but men may have, yea many men have a conſcience accuſing them of being in a very bad eſtate; and many men have an excuſing conſcience that plainly doth witneſſe that they are in a very good and gracious eſtate. *I and my people are wicked, ſaith Pharaoh.* His conſcience did accuſe him of being in a bad eſtate. *I am holy,* ſaith David; *I am thy ſervant.* His conſcience told him he was in the ſtate of grace So that he need not go farre to know what eſtate you are in: there is that in your boſome that can decide the matter. II. Exod. 9. 27. Pſal. 86. 2.

3. Men cannot deſire nor flie from an unknown eſtate: But men are commanded to flie from a bad eſtate, and ſeek out a good one: Therefore they may know the one and the other. *O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flie from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance,* ſaith *John* to the Phariſees. He ſuppoſeth theſe men might eaſily know that they were in a very bad eſtate, or elſe how could he ſay thus unto them? III. Matth. 3. 7. 8.

Before I come to the Uſes let us conſider theſe three things:

1. That every man living is born in a very bad eſtate. We all know it well; but oh that we would conſider it: *We are all by nature children of wrath.* Now here lieth the queſtion, When did we change our eſtate? We are in the ſame ſtate of damnation wherein we were born except we are come out of it. I ſay, here lieth the queſtion, Whether we are come out of it or no, whether we have mended our eſtate. Eph. 2. 3.

2. Conſider that the greateſt part of the world never mend their eſtates: But as they were born in a curſed eſtate, ſo they live and die in it. And I ſpeak not this of heathen only; but alas! how many in the viſible church do ſo, how many were there in the Church of *Philippi* whom the Apoſtle could not think of without weeping when he conſidered in what eſtate they were. So in the Church of Corinth, not many wiſe, not many rich, not many noble called; but commonly the meaneſt in the eye of the world were in the beſt eſtate towards God. Phil. 3. 17. 1 Cor 1. 26.

Nay more then so; Many of them who seek to get into a good estate misse of it and perish. See, *Luk.* 13. 24. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate*: Mark, it's a strait gate, and letteth but few in: *for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.* Here and there a few, even where the constant ministery is.

3. 3. Consider that it is a marvellous hard thing to passe from state unto state, from a bad unto a good estate. There is a very vast gulf between the state of sinne and the state of grace, and it is marvellous hard to passe it. These things premised, the Uses follow.

Use 1. *Of Instruction.* It is every mans duty to enquire after his estate.

1. This point may be many ways useful: First, for instruction. If God had made it possible unto us to find out what estate every one of us is in, then sure he would have us go about it and enquire after it. God might have left us to perish in our natural blindnesse, never to have known in what case we had been, untill we were past recovery. First, we are all wanderers from God, and from the ways of peace, and therefore God might justly have suffered us for ever to have wandred, and never to have been able to find out whether we had been right or wrong. Secondly, God hath dealt so with some: He hath suffered some to go on all their days blindfold to hell. Thus the Lord dealt with the Scribes and Pharisees. *Let them alone*, saith he, *they be blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch.* Ye see the Lord hath dealt so with some; and it is his mercy he hath not dealt so with us. Sith God hath made it possible for us to know, it is our duty to enquire after it: And that yet further for these reasons.

Matth. 15. 14.

Reasons. 2. Cor 13. 5.

1. First, because the Lord commandeth it: *Examine your own selves whether ye be in the faith, prove your selves: know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* Where you see the Apostle commandeth the duty of self-trial; And consider how he presseth it upon us: 1. *Do ye not know what estate you are in? then examine and enquire.* 2. *Do ye think you are in a good estate? look ye prove it, and be sure you be not in an errour. Do ye object ye do not know, neither*

can

can ye know? No? then your estate is very bad: find out some good tokens in you except you be reprobates. This command makes it a clear duty.

2. But a second reason to prove it our duty to enquire what estate we are in, is, because without the knowledge thereof we can never have any true peace in our consciences: The conscience must needs be without peace, so long as we are ignorant of what estate we are in: *Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* First the Apostle sheweth their estate; they were in a state of *justification:* and from the knowledge thereof they had *Peace.* We are bound to get true peace to our consciences; Oh, what a lamentable maze are we in till our consciences have peace? and this they cannot have untill we are fully acquainted in what case we stand before God: *Acquaint thy self with God and be at peace.* Rom 5.1. Job.22.21

3. Thirdly, we can never be fit for any duty of Gods worship, as long as we know not what estate we are in: We can never be fit for any holy duty to heare, pray, receive the Sacrament: *Let a man examine himself and so let him eat,* &c. First, he must examine in what estate he is before he can be fit for that high service. So for repentance: *Let us search and try our ways and turn again to the Lord:* first find our selves in an ill estate, and then return; So for joy; it is a duty to rejoyce in the Lord: But we are never fit for rejoycing, till we have proved what estate we are in: *Let every man prove his own work so shall he have rejoycing.* We can never be fit for any duty untill we know in what estate we are in, because every duty varieth according as the estate of every man is. To instance in prayer; He that is not in the state of grace must pray one way, and he that is in the state of salvation must pray another way: the one that he may be converted and brought home to God; the other that he may be strengthned and increased in grace. And so for the duty of hearing, &c. 1.Cor.11. 28. Lam.3.40 Gal. 6. 4.

The second use is for direction to let us understand by what means we may know what estate we are in. There be foure means to know this. *Use 2. Of Direction.*

Means to know what eſtate we are in.

1. By our outward and inward actions. I do not ſay, by our outward actions: For a man may be in the ſtate of hypocriſie, & yet his outward actions may be good. Neither do I ſay by our inward actions alone: For a man may be in the ſtate of ſelf-deceit and yet ſay his heart is good, and his meaning and mind good. But I ſay by them both put together. Our Saviour ſetteth it out by a tree: *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit.* So if the heart bringeth forth the fruit of righteouſneſſe, joy in good things, patience, meekneſſe, gentleneſſe, love, obedience, godly converſation. &c. Theſe evidence a good eſtate: but if the heart bringeth forth deadneſſe, earthlineſſe, impatience, evil converſation, &c. Theſe are corrupt fruits and ſignes of a very bad eſtate.

Matth. 7. 17.

2. Ye may know what eſtates you are in by your inclinations and diſpoſitions from whence theſe actions proceed. Are your hearts enclined heaven-ward and God-ward as *Davids*, are ye bent to holineſſe and ſelf-denial, &c. as a bow is bent to ſhoot the arrow? This is a ſigne of a good eſtate: as 1 *Chron.* 22. 19. there is ſpeech of *ſetting the heart to ſeek God.* Ye know when a man would do a thing indeed, we ſay *he is ſet on't.* It may be ye do ſome good duties, make ſome fair offers of ſeeking God; but are your hearts ſet on't, or are they ſet on the world and inclined earth-ward? The inclinations of every creature in the world do ever ſhow what the creature is. How do we know that a ſtone is heavy? becauſe it inclineth downward. How do we know a man is cholerick? becauſe he is inclined unto wrath. So a mans eſtate may be known by his conſtant enclination either to good or evil.

Pſal. 119. 112.

3. One may know what eſtate he is in by that reflexive act, which is proper only to man. There is an act in mans ſoul (we call it a *reflex* act) which no creature hath but only man whereby he can perceive what himſelf is and doth. When a man thinketh or ſpeaketh, he can reflect upon himſelf, and perceive what he thinketh or ſpeaketh: when he prayeth, he can reflect upon his own heart, and perceive how it carrieth it ſelf all along in his prayers. I ſay no creature in the world hath in it

it this reflexive act, but only man. The fire burneth, but it can not reflect upon its own burning: *Oculus non videt ſe videre*, The eye ſeeth, but it doth not ſee that it doth ſee: that is, that creature doth not perceive what it doth when it ſeeth. But every man hath this reflexive act in him, whereby he is privy to what himſelf thinketh, doth, is. *None knoweth the things of a man ſave the ſpirit of a man that is in him.* This is the reaſon why ſome know not what eſtate they are in, becauſe they choke their own ſpirit, and hoodwink their conſciences. Thine own heart knoweth how it is with thee, and would faithfully tell thee if thou wouldſt enquire of it and hearken unto it. Search with Gods candle, and thou mayſt eaſily find what is in thee. *The ſpirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, ſearching all the inward parts of the belly.*

1 Cor. 2. 11.

Prov. 20. 27.

4. Ye may know what a ſtate ye are in by a certain kind of feeling. As there is a kind of bodily feeling whereby every man knoweth the eſtate of his body whether he be ſick or in health, ſo there is a ſpiritual feeling. The two diſciples did feel their hearts burn: Paul did feel a great combat in him between the fleſh and the ſpirit: So if men be covetous and worldly, they may feel it. Yet indeed ſome men be paſt feeling: Their caſe is the worſe becauſe they cannot feel how bad it is: But for the moſt, they may eaſily feel what their eſtate is.

Luk. 24. 32. Eph. 4. 19.

The third uſe is, to ſhow you the impediments that hinder this knowledge. If you would attein to know what eſtate you are in, then remove the impediments; which are

Uſe 3. Impediments.

1. Vain thoughts. Men who are in a ſtate of ſinne and wrath, yet have many vain thoughts lodging within them, keeping them from knowing it: *God is mercifull*; and *Chriſt died for ſinners*; and, *There be worſe ſinners then they*; *why ſhould they think ſo ill of themſelves?* and, *they may be better all in good time*: Theſe vain thoughts hoodwink their eyes that they cannot ſee their eſtate, nor reſolve that it is ſo dangerous as indeed it is. *O Jeruſalem, waſh thy heart from wickednes: how long ſhall theſe vain thoughts lodge within thee?* They were in a very bad eſtate; and yet they had ſuch vain thoughts that they could not ſee it.

Jer. 4. 14.

2. Presumption is another impediment. Men pray and hear and do other good duties, and so take all to be well without serious examining. This was the case of the Laodicean people: They thought they had that in them which they had not, and that their estate was good, when it was nothing so.

Rev. 3. 17.

Another let are the cares of this life. Whereby the heart is so occupied that it doth not find time to search its own estate, Therefore our Saviour saith, *Take heed that your hearts be not over-charged with the cares of this life, lest that they come upon you unawares*: intimating that these cares are great lets from considering our estates.

Luk. 21. 34.

4. Another let is an evil conscience, which affrighteth a man so soon as he beginneth to stirre, and maketh him afraid to go on to look soundly into his estate, *He that doth evil hateth the light*.

Joh. 3. 20.

5. Another let is ignorance. *There is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God.* Mark; they did not seek in what case they stood before God, because they did not understand.

Rom 3. 11

6. Another let is, spiritual sloth and sluggishnesse of heart. Men cannot endure to take pains with their own hearts til they have made out a true judgment in what case they are: They begin and quickly give over; and so for want of diligence and painstaking make nothing sure.

Use 4. Of Exhortation.

The last use is for exhortation: That all men would bestirre themselves and set in earnest upon this enquiry, That we may every one know in what state we stand.

1. Consider, this is an enquiry about our souls. We enquire about our outward man, about the estate of our bodies and worldly affairs, &c. Oh, let us not neglect this main enquiry. *Am I in Christ, yea or no? Am I a new creature, yea or no? Doth my soul live to God or no?*

2. Consider, this is a question about our everlasting estate. We can never have comfort untill we have put this out of question: and therefore this is a question which all questions must give way unto. If ye be not in Christ, ye had need lay aside

aſide all and look about it only. How can men eat, drink, ſleep, &c. ſith the wrath of God abideth upon all unbelievers? Methinks our ſouls ſhould take no content, do nothing elſe but faint after Chriſt, until we know our intereſt in him. I ſay again; This is the grand enquiry, that buſineſſe which all buſineſſe muſt give place unto. Oh, the ſloth of our ſouls! Let us in time awake and rouſe them up, and never reſt untill we know our own eſtate to be good before God, that ſo our hearts may have comfort, and that with God.

A Treatiſe of Conſcience.

ROM. 2. 15.

Which ſhew the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conſciences alſo bearing them witneſſe, and their thoughts in the mean while, accuſing or elſe excuſing one another.

I Have ſhewed you, That every man is in an eſtate before God. And that hath made way now to a Treatiſe of conſcience, which will ſhew us what eſtate we are in before God. I deſire to handle it common-place-wiſe: And firſt I will tell you in brief what the conſcience of every man is, I ſay, of every man; For Angels and devils have a conſcience too; ye may ſee it in the ſpeech of the Angel to *John* when *John* would have worſhipped him, *I am thy fellow-ſervant*, ſaith he, *ſee thou do it not*. Mark; He had a conſcience that could ſay, *I am a ſervant, and therefore muſt not take Worſhip to me*. So for the devils: when our Saviour bade them come forth of the poſſeſſed, they ſay, *Art thou come to torment us before our time*. See, they had a conſcience that told them there would be a time when they ſhould be further tormented

What conſcience is.

Rev. 19. 10.

Matth. 8. 29.

mented. But I am not to speak of such consciences, but of the conscience of man. Now the conscience of man is the judgment of man upon himself as he is subject to Gods judgment: Divines use to expresse it in this Syllogisme, *He that truly believeth in Christ shall be saved*: My conscience telleth me this is Gods word: *But I beleeve truly in Christ*. My conscience telleth me this also. *Therefore I shall be saved.* And so also on the contrary side. So that conscience is a mans true judgment of himself: *If we would judge our selves:* that is, if we would bring our selves before the Tribunal of conscience to receive its judgment.

1 Cor. 11. 31.

Foure Propositions are contained in that portion of Scripture, which I have chosen to make the subject of this ensuing Treatise, *Rom.* 2.15.

Foure Propositions.

1. That there is in every man a conscience. [*Their consciences bearing them witnesse,*] Every one of them had a conscience bearing them witnesse.

2. That the light which conscience is directed to work by is knowledge [*written in their hearts.*]

3. That the bond that bindeth a mans conscience is Gods law [*which shew the effect of the law written in their hearts.*]

4. That the office and duty of conscience is to bear witnesse either with our selves or against our selves, accusing or excusing our selves or actions [*bearing witnesse, and their thoughts accusing or excusing one another.*] I begin with the first.

Proposition I.

There is in every man a conscience.

I. There is in every man a conscience. John 8. 9. 2 Cor. 1. 12 Tit. 1. 15.

THere was a conscience in all these heathen in the text: *their consciences bearing them witnesse*: There was a conscience in the Scribes and Pharisees, *being convicted of their own consciences.* There is a conscience in good men; as in *Paul; Our rejoycing is this, the testimony of our conscience,* There is a conscience in wicked men, *their mind and conscience is defiled.* As it is impossible

possible the fire should be without heat, so it is impossible that any man should be without a conscience. Indeed we use to say, such a one hath no conscience: but our meaning is, that he hath no good conscience. But every one hath a conscience either good or bad. The Lord ingraved conscience in man when he created him at first. True it is, since the fall of man conscience is miserably corrupted; but man can never put it off; Conscience continueth for ever in every man, whether he be in earth, or heaven, or hell. The most base and devillish profanelings in the world have a conscience: Let them choke it or smother it as much as they can, let them whore it, or game it, or drink it away as much as they are able for their hearts; yet conscience will continue in spight of their teeth.

1. No length of time can wear this conscience out. What made *Josephs* brethren to remember the cruel usage they shewed him but conscience? It was about twenty years before; yet they could not wear it out.

2. No violence nor force is able to suppresse conscience, but that one day or other it will shew it self. What made *Judas* go and carry back the money that he betrayed our Saviour for, and also to cry out, *I have sinned*, but conscience? No question but he laboured to suppresse it, but he could not.

3. No greatnesse nor power is able to stifle conscience, but that it will one day like a bandog flie in a sinners face. What made *Pharaoh* cry out, *I am wicked*, but conscience? He was a great King, and yet he was not able to over-power conscience.

4. No musick, mirth or jovializing can charm conscience, but it will play the devil to a wretched soul for all that. What was the evil spirit that came upon *Saul* of melancholly, but conscience? He thought to allay it with instruments of musick, but it still came again.

5. Death it self is not able to part conscience from a sinner. What is that worm that shall never die, but only conscience? and in hell conscience is as that fire that never goeth out.

I confesse some seeme to have lost conscience quite; They

can omit good duties as though they had no conscience at all: they can deferre repentance and turning to God as though they had no more conscience then a beast: but one day conscience will appear, and shew plainly that it was present with them every moment of their lives, and privy to all their thoughts, and all their ways, and set before them all the things that they have done. Be men never so secure and senseleſſe, and feared for the present, conscience will break out either first or last: Either here or in hell it will appear to every man, That he hath and ever had a conscience.

Reasons Now the reasons why God did plant a conscience in every man living, are,

1. 1. Because the Lord is a very righteous Judge: And as he commandeth earthly Judges not to judge without witnesse: so he himself will not judge without witnesse, and therefore he planteth a conscience in every one to bring in evidence for him or against him at Gods tribunal.

2. 2. Because the Lord is very merciful. We are wondrous forgetful and mindleſſe of God and of our own souls, and have need to be quickned up to our duties; therefore the Lord hath given every one of us a conscience to be a continual monitour. Sometime we forget to pray, and then conscience putteth us in mind to go to God: sometime we are dull in the duty, and conscience is as a prick to quicken us. Sometime our passions are distempered, and then conscience checketh and commandeth us to bridle them. We should never be kept in any order if it were not for conscience: Therfore hath the Lord in mercy given us a conscience.

Use 1. The first use is to condemn that diabolical Proverb common among men; *Conscience is hanged a great while ago.* No, no; *Achitophel* may hang himself, but he cannot hang his conscience: *Saul* may kill himself, but conscience cannot be killed. It is *a worm that never dieth.* As the reasonable soul of man is immortal, so conscience also is immortal.

Mar. 9. 44.

Use 2. 2. This condemneth such as go about to suppresse conscience: their conscience maketh them melancholick & lumpish now & then

then, and they go about to shake it off. Alas! why do you go about that which is utterly impossible? Ye may suppresse it for a while, and gagge it for a while: but ye can never shake it off. Conscience sticketh so close that a man may assoon shake off himself as his conscience. And indeed his conscience is himself: *Let a man examine himself*, that is, in his conscience. *Judge in your selves*, that is, Judge in your consciences. 1 Cor. 11. 28. Verse 13.

Thirdly, this confuteth that drunken opinion. That conscience is nothing but a present fit of melancholy. No: it causeth it may be the present melancholick fit, but it is not it. Conscience is a standing power in a man that is evermore with him, and will evermore judge him and condemne him if he be guilty before God. It will be with him when his dumpish fit is over. Let him laugh and be merry; yet conscience lies at the bottome of all, and will spoil all the mirth. Let the drunkard be never so jovial; I will not believe but conscience in the midst of that drunken mirth causeth some sadnesse within, and telleth him this is a very wicked life. Let the carnal hypocrite daub up the matter with good duties, and good Prayers, and good hopes; I cannot believe but there is a conscience lieth at the bottome and telleth him he is rotten for all this. You may see this in *Cain*: He had been at a good duty sacrificing to the Lord; but his countenance fell when he had done, conscience did lie at the bottome, and did tell him God did not accept him. Conscience is with evil men at Church, at Sermon, at Sacrament, and telleth them secretly that they are not the persons to whom the blessing of these ordinances belong. *Use 3.* Prov. 14. 13. Gen. 4. 5.

Lastly, this may be for exhortation to the godly; That they would consider this, that they have ever a conscience within them, and that therefore they would labour always to keep it void of offence: which was *Pauls* exercise, *Acts* 24. 16. Take heed you offend not your consciences in duties of piety towards God, in your prayings, hearings, &c. no nor in your callings, eating, drinking, liberties, recreations: Look always to your consciences that you offend them not, because they are *Use 4.*

ever with you. When two live ever together they had need not offend one another; else there will be no quiet: You and your consciences must ever live together: if ye offend them, ye are like to have very ill lives. Better live with a curst scold, then live with an offended conscience; ye had better offend the whole world then offend conscience. There are none whom ye are always to live with; but conscience ye are always to live with. Ye are not always to live with your husbands, nor always with your wives, nor always with your parents or masters, there is a time when you must part, but conscience and you will never part: Therefore labour to keep it void of offence. And thus much of the first Proposition, *There is in every man a conscience.*

Proposition II.

The light that Conscience acteth by, is knowledge.

II. *Proposition.*

THis knowledge is twofold; 1. Of Gods law. 2. Of our selves.

1. The knowledge of Gods law. To know Gods will what is good, what is bad; what God commandeth, what he forbiddeth. Every man under heaven hath this law of God in some measure writ in his conscience. I confesse, Gods children only know Gods law to purpose, as it is a light to guide them in the way of salvation: but all the world have some measure of knowledge, whereby they may gather that there is a God, and that he ought to be worshipped and obeyed, and that he hath power over life and death. All the world have knowledge in some measure, what is good, and what is not, what is to be done and what not, what is according to conscience and what not: All the world have this knowledge in some measure; I do not say, enough for salvation, but enough to make them inexcusable before God for not following that light, and not living according to that knowledge which they have. If there were not some light in this behalf, some knowledge of the law of God in every man, conscience could do no thing.

2. Know-

2. Knowledge of our ſelves: This alſo is the light that conſcience acteth by. There is in every man ſome meaſure of knowledge of himſelf according to the meaſure of knowledge that he hath of Gods law. Our conſciences look backward and forward; forward to Gods law, and backward on our ſelves. Whether we be ſuch as Gods law requireth, yea or no. Firſt, ye may finde this in good men. This light did the conſcience of *David* go by: *I was upright before God*, ſaith his conſcience, *and I kept my ſelf from mine own iniquity*. His conſcience had a light whereby he knew what he did. Secondly, ye ſhall finde this in wicked men. This light the conſcience of *Achan* went by: *I have ſinned againſt the Lord God of Iſrael, and thus and thus have I done.*

Pſ. 18.23.

Ioſh. 7.20.

Theſe are the two lights that every mans conſcience goes by: It hath light in ſome meaſure to know the Law of God, what he ſhould do and what he ſhould not do; and it hath light in ſome meaſure to know himſelf, what he hath done or not done, whether he hath done as he ſhould yea or no. Now theſe two lights are neceſſary; as thus I prove.

Firſt, the knowledge of Gods Law is neceſſary, for elſe conſcience cannot work. A drunkard might be drunk every day in the yeere, and yet conſcience could not trouble him nor condemne him of ſin unleſſe he knew the Law, That God hath forbid drunkenneſſe. And ſo the ſwearer. And ſo evill words and bad thoughts conſcience cannot accuſe for, unleſſe there be ſo much light as to know they are forbidden. And therefore Divines do all ſay that the *Syntereſis* is neceſſarie to the exerciſe of conſcience. The *Syntereſis* is this; When a man keeps in his minde the knowledge of the things contained in Gods Law: namely, That we muſt obey God, honour our parents, not commit adultery, not kill, not ſteal, not lie, not covet, &c. Unleſſe the knowledge of theſe be kept in minde conſcience cannot work. And therefore when we would ſtirre a mans conſcience, we appeal to his knowledge; *Know you not that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdome of God?* As if he had ſaid, Your own conſciences may condemn you to the pit of hell *if* ye be unrighteous,

1 Cor. 6 9

unrighteous, because your *Synteresis* can tell you that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdome of God. This is the reason why we say that there is a naturall conscience and there is an illuminated conscience; because some have no light but onely the light of nature, some have besides the light of Gods word, which sheweth that which nature sheweth, and much more clearly, and teacheth many things more which nature cannot teach: And hence the conscience of the illightned condemneth for such things as the naturall conscience never stirreth about.

Secondly, the knowledge of our selves is needfull; else conscience cannot act neither. Though we know what Gods Law requireth and what not, what is good and what not, yet unlesse we know whether we go with it or against it, conscience cannot accuse nor excuse. As for example; A close hypocrite, he knoweth well enough that the Lord hath condemned hypocrisie, and that hypocrites must have their portion in hell: yet if he do not know himself to be an hypocrite, his conscience can never condemne him for being one. And therefore both these knowledges are necessary, as well the knowlege of a mans self as of Gods Law. Many who had a hand in crucifying our Saviour, sinned grievously; yet they sinned not against nowledge, because they knew not what they did: *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.* Luk. 23.34

Thirdly, It is a contradiction to say a blind conscience in act. The conscience cannot be blind and yet actually condemne. Indeed the conscience it self may be blind, but it can never act and be blind; If it truly accuse or excuse it must have some light. It is true, it may erroneously excuse or accuse, & yet have no true ligh; Seeming light is enough to do that; seeming knowledg is enogh to make conscience erroneously excuse; As they who killed the Apostles, their consciences excused them, & told them they did God good service; they seemed to know it was good service to God, and therefore their consciences excused them, &c. Thus ye see that the light that conscience worketh by is knowledge. Joh. 16.2.

Use. 1. The use of this point is first, to let us see the infinite necessity of knowledge.

knowledge. As good have no conſcience at all, as conſcience without knowledge; for it cannot act and performe its office. This is the reaſon why ſo many thouſands go on in their ſinnes without repentance, becauſe being ignorant they have no conſcience to prick them thereunto; as *Jer.* 8. 6. *No man repenteth him of his wickedneſſe, ſaying, What have I done?* Why, what was the reaſon that conſcience did not prick them, and ſay, This thou haſt done and that, Thus ye have rebelled, The text anſwereth in the next verſe, *My people know not the judgment of the Lord. The Stork knoweth her time, and the Turtle, and the Swallow; but my people do not know their duties.*

Another uſe is, to exhort us that we would labour to perfect the light of conſcience, that it may be able to guide us and direct us unto heaven. Our conſcience hath knowledge enough by the light of nature to make us inexcuſable, and to clear the juſtice of God though he ſhould damne us for ever; but there muſt be a greater light then that, that muſt guide us to heaven. O let us pray to Chriſt the true light to ſet up this light in us, that we may never be at a loſſe in our way to happineſſe, never ſtep out of the right path but our conſcience may be able to put us in again, never go ſlowly but our conſcience may ſpurre us on faſter; that our conſcience may not be like the ſnuff of a candle in a ſocket, that flameth up now and then, and then is dark again, and again it flameth out and is dark again: A man may ſee his book by it, but he cannot ſee to read; he may ſee his his pen and ink by it, but he cannot ſee to write; a woman may ſee her needle and cloth by it, but ſhe cannot ſee to work; ſo it is with ſome mens conſciences; Their light is ſo dimme that they can ſee the duties, but they cannot ſee to do them; they can ſee the commandments of God, but they cannot ſee to obey them. O labour to perfect the light of your conſciences, that ye may ſee to walk by them. And thus much alſo of the ſecond propoſition, *The light that conſcience acteth by is knowledge.* *Uſe 2.*

Now I ſhould come to the third propoſition, which as I firſt propounded them was this, *the bond that bindes conſcience is Gods Law*; But I will now a little alter the method, and make the other

other which was propounded last to be the third in the handling, and it is this.

Proposition III.

The office of Conscience is to bear Witnesse, to accuse or excuse.

III. *Proposition.* The office of conscience is to bear witnesse.

Conscience is put into this office by God himself. It is Gods officer; not onely his register-book that shall be opened at the day of judgment, wherein is set down our thoughts, words and deeds; but it is a preacher also to tell us our duty both towards God and towards man; yea, it is a powerfull preacher; it exhorteth, urgeth, provoketh; yea, the most powerfull preacher that can be; it will cause the stoutest and stubbornest heart under heaven to quake now and then; it will never let us alone till it have brought us either to God or to the Devil. Conscience is joyned in commission with Gods own spirit to be an instructour unto us in the way we should walk; so that the spirit and it are resisted or obeyed together, grieved or delighted together; We cannot sinne against conscience but we sinne also against Gods spirit; we cannot check our owne consciences but we check and quench the holy spirit of God.

Rom. 9. 1. The office of conscience to our selves is, to bear witnesse; *My conscience beareth me witnesse*, saith *Paul*. Conscience is alwayes ready to do this office, if it shall at any time be invited unto it; For conscience looketh sometimes for inviting; sometimes it will not bear witnesse unlesse we invite it and call upon it so to do. But there will come a time when it will do it and must do it, and shall do it, namely at death or at judgment; then it will bear witnesse wether men invite it or no. Now it may be suppressed and silenced and kept under from witnessing; but then it must bear witnesse and shall, either excusing or accusing, acquitting or condemning, *when God shall judge the secrets of mens hearts*, as the Apostle speaketh.

Foure Properties of Conscience. The properties that are given unto conscience in the discharge of its office, are four; 1. It is supreme; 2. It is impartiall; 3. It is faithfull; 4 It is privie.

1. It

1. It is ſupreme: It hath higheſt authority; it is the moſt uncontrolable and ableſt witneſſe that can be; the greateſt, weightieſt witneſſe in the world; better then ten thouſand witneſſes. Though all the world do condemne us, yet if our own conſciences do not, we need not fear: And ſo on the contrary, if conſcience do condemne us, it will be ſmall comfort though all the world flatter and commend and excuſe us. It is a ſupreme witneſſe. Though all the Angels in heaven ſhould come and beare witneſſe, their witneſſe is not ſo uncontrolable as conſcience is. There is no appealing from the witneſſe of conſcience; we muſt be tried by it. If conſcience do accuſe and condemne us, the Lord only is greater then our conſcience, 1. *John* 3. 20. and will give judgment with it when it doth its office. And if our conſcience do not condemne us, we may be confident to ſtand before all the judges and kings in the world, yea, *We may have confidence towards God*, ſaith the text. 2. And as conſcience is ſupreme in bearing of witneſſe, ſo alſo it is ſupreme in commanding. All the commands of it are powerfull and ſupreme: it will not be ſlighted: it bindeth kings and princes: Nay, though God himſelfe command the contrary, yet can we not diſobey conſcience without ſinne. By this it appeareth, that when conſcience doth witneſſe its witneſſe is ſupreme; when conſcience commandeth, its command is ſupreme.

2. Conſcience as it is ſupreme in witneſſing or commanding, ſo it is impartiall in judging. It reſpecteth no perſons, no eſtates, but accuſeth the richeſt as well as the pooreſt, the greateſt as well as the meaneſt. It made great Belſhazzer ſo to quake *that the joynts of his loyns were looſed, and his knees ſmote one againſt another*, Dan. 5. 6. It made great *Felix* to tremble to heare *Paul* ſpeak of righteouſneſſe and of judgement. *Felix* thought to ſcare *Paul*; but conſcience ſcared *Felix*. So on the other ſide, it is impartiall in excuſing. It will give evidence of the good works of the pooreſt in the world, as well as of the wealthieſt. Art thou never ſo mean? thy conſcience will be as ready to excuſe thee if thou haſt done well, as if thou wert the

greateſt. It is impartial in its office: Others, it may be, dare not or will not accuſe, but conſcience ſpareth none, no not it ſelf: Though its accuſations do load and burden and torment it ſelf, yet it will do its office.

3. Conſcience alſo is faithful in its office and ſincere. It alwayes ſpeaketh of us as it thinketh: It may be deceived and miſtaken for a time, but it never ſpeaketh contrary to what it thinketh; It is a faithful and ſincere witneſſe of our thoughts, words, actions and courſes, whether they be good or evill, ſo farre as it is illightned by Gods word. It ever giveth evidence aright; it never flattereth nor condemneth any without a cauſe: It is a faithful and a very upright witneſſe. Others may diſſemble with us, and commend us and applaud us when we are naught, and call us good men and good women when we are nothing ſo: but this will tell us plainly how vile and ſinfull we are; and if we ſay we are good when we are not, it will tell us plainly we lie. 1 Joh. 2. 4. *He that ſaith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a lyer.* Mark, though he ſay it, yet his conſcience giveth him the lie. It is faithful again in excuſing. It beareth witneſſe of every good duty we perform, and of whatſoever good is in us. Though all *Jobs* friends ſpake evill of him, and God himſelf by his outward judgments ſeemed to condemn him for a wicked man, yet ſtill his conſcience (like a faithfull witneſſe) did not forſake him, nay, it offered to reaſon with God himſelf, Job. 13. 3. *I would reaſon with God: I know I ſhall be juſtified, and I will never forſake mine innocency till I die.* Still his conſcience ſtood for him and excuſed him. Thus on both ſides conſcience is a faithfull and ſincere witneſſe: it will not be corrupted to ſpeak otherwiſe then it knoweth the matter is.

4. It is moſt privie to what it doth witneſſe. It is more privie to what we have done then all the world: It can ſay more for us or againſt us then all the world. *Thou knoweſt all the wickedneſſe that thy heart is privie unto*, ſaith *Solomon* to *Shimei*, 1 *King.* 2. 44.

Uſe. The uſe of all this is; Seeing conſcience is ſo ſupreme, ſo impartiall, ſo faithful, ſo privie, we ſhould take keed how we do any;

any thing that might give it advantage againſt us. If we were to appear before an earthly judge to anſwer for our behaviour, and ſhould have a companion preſent continually with us, marking every thing in us, telling us of every fault, and witneſſing it againſt us unto the judge, how careful would we be of doing any thing that might give him advantage againſt us? Lo, we have conſcience as a continual wath-man, eſpying out all our wayes, ſetting down what ever we do amiſſe, checking us for it for the preſent, and one day accuſing us before God, and ſetting all things in order before our faces; Oh how ſhould we then labour to get into Chriſt Jeſus, that our conſciences may be purged in his bloud, and ſtudy all our life long to keep peace and friendſhip with them. Wo be to them who live in their ſinnes! They will need no other witneſſe to come againſt them to condemn them for ever, but this witneſſe conſcience which lyeth continually in their boſoms.

This I have ſpoken for the office of conſcience, which is to bear witneſſe either with us or againſt us: Now the parts of this bearing witneſſe are, firſt, its ſingle witneſſing; ſecondly, its judicial witneſſing. By *ſingle bearing witneſſe*, I mean that conſcience beareth witneſſe what we have done, and what we do, and what we intend to do, and what we are: By *judiciall bearing witneſſe*, I mean that conſcience doth paſſe ſentence on the ſame whether it be good or evil, whether it be concerning the action or the perſon.

Of conſciences ſingle bearing witneſſe.

Firſt, therefore of the ſingle bearing witneſſe of conſcience; And that is about three things: 1. What we have done: 2. What we intend to do; 3. What is the frame and bent of our heart.

1. It beareth witneſſe what we have done; what in our childhood, what in our youth, what in our riper age, what openly, what ſecretly. Thoſe things which ſeem to be forgotten, conſcience will remember them to us: Like a writing in marble, though it may be filled and choked with duſt and covered with rubbiſh, yet when that is done away, and the ſtone ſwept clean, then the writing will appear legible; ſo though mens deeds may for the preſent ſeem to be forgotten, yet they are

written in their hearts with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, as *Origen* observeth upon *Jer.* 17.1. Now the thoughts and cares of this life put them out of our minds; but the time will come when all worldly businesse shall cease, and the onely busines shalbe to look into the records of conscience. We use to say, Conscience hath a very good memory. The chief Butler had forgot his promise unto *Joseph*; but his conscience remembred him of it two yeers after: *I remember my faults this day*, saith his conscience. *Adonibezek* had forgot his cruelty; but his conscience brought it to his mind: *As I have done so God hath requited me*, saith his conscience.

Gen. 41.9

Iudg. 1 7.

2. Conscience beareth witnesse of what we intend and purpose to do, whether against God or man. It will testifie every purpose and project of the heart though it be never acted, though it die in the heart and never come to light. Men little think of this: *Tush* (saith one) *I never did such a thing, though I once intended it, or had some thought about it.* Mark; those very thoughts wil conscience bring forth and testifie what they were. Heare the Apostle; *in that day God shall judge the secrets of men*, &c. The most hidden things conscience shall bring to light, and Christ shall judge them.

Rom. 2.16

3. Conscience beareth witnesse of the bent and frame of our hearts, what we affect most and love most, and rejoyce and delight in most, and desire most and grieve for most, what our affections runne upon most, whether upon God or the world, whether upon heaven or the things of this life. Conscience bare witnesse to David, that his delight was in the law of the Lord, that God was his portion, that Gods statutes were his counsellours. Conscience bare witnesse to the false teachers in Christs time, that they affected vain glory and the praise of men more then the praise of God. Conscience bare witnesse to *Demas*, that notwithstanding his fair profession his heart was set upon the world. Conscience bare witnesse to *Jehu*, that for all his seeming zeal his heart was not upright.

Ps. 119.77

But it may be objected, How can this be? *The heart is deceitfull above all things: who can know it?*

Object. 1. Ier. 17.9.

Who

Who can know it? That is, Who else can know it but a man himself? None under God can know the heart of man but a mans own conscience, the spirit of man that is in him. I confesse a man may be ignorant of some secret and particular deceit in his heart; but who knoweth not the general standing of his own heart? or may know the chief bent of his own soul. *David* in a particular deceit was ignorant: *I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved*, never distrust God more, never be disquieted in my mind more. He was deceived in that particular; but he knew very well the general and chief bent of his heart, that it was truly set upon God and upon holinesse. 2. It is true, many men take it that their hearts are set upon God when they are not; but what is the reason? Not because they do not or may not know the contrary, that they love the world most: but because they will not know it, they are unwilling to believe it, they are loth to have any bad conceit of themselves. So that when Jeremy saith, *The heart is deceitfull above all things: who can know it?* his meaning is, What carnall man can abide to know the worst of himself? 3. It is not because they know it not, but because they will not heare the testimony of conscience: but when it telleth them truly how the case is with them, they gather all the rotten and broken pieces of arguments together to stop the mouth of conscience, and to perswade themselves to think well of themselves. 4. Men seem not to know their own hearts, not because they do not know what they are, but because they are ignorant of Gods Law whereby they should judge of themselves. They know their hearts are set on the world, and that the bent and frame of their affections are placed on earthly things: but they hope an under-affection to God will be accepted, to love God in the second place will serve the turn. They know they are carnall; but they hope such carnality may be in a man and yet he be right.

Answ.

Psal. 30. 6

Yea, but a mans heart may say on the contrary side, that he loveth the world more then he loveth God when he doth not: how then doth conscience bear right witnesse? I answer,

Object. 2.

Answ. This ariseth either from the strength of corruption and weaknesse of grace: We look into our selves, and see our corruptions violent, and our love to God small; and so we are deceived, not seeing the radicall power of this love of God, which in regard of its vertue is stronger then the other: As a fool, if he shou'd feel hot water, would conclude that there is no cold at all in it, whereas there is radicall cold in that water, such as will expell all that heat in little space. Or else this ariseth from anguish of spirit, which so disturbeth the minde, that it cannot see its own condition, nor be capable of the comforts belonging unto it; as it was with the Israelites, *Exod.6.9.* otherwise doubtlesse we may know our own hearts; and when our conscience beareth witnesse, its witnesse is right.

Use 1. I. Use, of reproof to those who stand out against the witnesse of their conscience, and like heard-hearted felons plead still, *Not guilty*, though never so much evidence come against them, though conscience oft tell them, this they have done, thus they do, such they are. Oh stop not your eares against conscience; stand not out against it, but beleeve its testimony, and make use of it to repent of the evill it accuseth of while mercy may be had, before God himself cometh and joyneth with conscience to condemn for ever.

Use 2. II. It serveth for singular encouragement to all to abound in good works. Conscience will bear witnesse of them all to our unspeakable comfort in the time of afflictions, yea at death and judgment. *Job* felt it a sweet thing to have conscience give in testimony of his integrity and uprightnesse. When his friends proved *miserable comforters*, and God himself seemed to *write bitter things against him*, yet his conscience witnessed that he had been *eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame*, he had fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and comforted the fatherlesse. There is not a good thing that ever we do but conscience will afford us the sweetnesse and comfort of it in our troubles: *Remember, O Lord*, saith Hezekiah, *that I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart.* Isa. 38. 3.

2. The judicial bea- We have spoken of consciences single bearing witnesse: Now

Now fo'loweth its judicial bearing witneſſe; which is when it paſſeth ſentence upon the moral of our actions, whether they be good or evil, whether bleſſed or curſed. This is performed by a Logical diſcourſe, by way of reaſoning on this manner, The word ſaith, *Whoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery in his heart:* That is the *Syntereſis.* Now the aſſumption; *But I have had wanton eyes and luſtful lookings after a Woman*: That is the ſingle bearing witneſſe of conſcience. *Therefore I have committed adultery in my heart*: That is the judiciary ſentence of conſcience which it paſſeth on a mans ſelf. So again, *Whoſoever crucifieth the fleſh with the affections and luſts, he is in Chriſt*: *But*, ſaith conſcience, *I crucifie the fleſh with its affections and luſts: Therefore I am in Chriſt.* Though there be not the forme of this diſcourſe in our conſciences, yet there is the force of it: for when conſcience doth judicially witneſſe againſt any man or for any man, it doth it by the word, and proceedeth in the way which is propounded. ring witneſſe of conſcience.

The uſe of this is, Firſt for comfort to the godly, who may hence gather the aſſurance of their ſalvation from the rule of Gods word, and the witneſſe of their conſcience that they walk by this rule. The word ſaith, *He that hungreth and thirſteth after righteouſneſſe ſhall be filled*; *He that doth theſe things ſhall never fall, &c.* Get the rule of your hearts and lives to meet and ye have what ye deſire. O what infinite mercy is this to all godly ſouls, that the Lord hath planted this conſcience in their boſomes, that they need not go farre for their comfort; their own conſciences and the rule may preach it to them. *Uſe* 1. Matth. 5, 6. 1 Pet. 1, 10.

Secondly, The wicked on the other ſide, if they continue as they are, may hence gather arguments for their own damnation. If the rule and conſcience might be heard, they would ſpeak bitter things againſt them, and give a fearful ſentence on them. It may be they can ſmother their conſciences now for a time; but they will one day read them a fearful lecture. I ſpeak not now only of thoſe who drown their conſciences in their cups, and ſear their conſciences by their groſſe ſins; but of thoſe who would *Uſe* 2.

would seem godly and perform good duties, but with hypocritical hearts and carnal minds. O that they would hear but conscience argue a little in this manner; *To be carnally minded is death*, that is, *is an evident sign of a man that is in the state of death and damnation*, *But*, saith conscience, *I am carnally minded*; or *we are carnally minded: Therefore we have an argument about us of death and damnation.* And so also for all other sins; There is not a wicked man under heaven but he may argue out of his own miserable estate by his conscience, or he might if it were awaked, as one day it will be.

Use 3. Thirdly, this may serve for instruction. No matter what opinions men have of us in the world: The question is, What is the judgment of our own consciences upon us? It may be thou art taken for a man of great knowledge, and a forward man in godlinesse; it may be the godly dare not judge otherwise of thee, but the question is, What is the judgment of conscience? Doth not thy conscience tell thee thou art but a proud fool, conceited of thy knowledge, and loveſt to hear thy selfe talk? And so for thy performance of good duties, what testimony doth conscience give of the manner of doing of them?

2 Cor. 1. 12 The testimonial of conscience is above all testimonials in the world: all the good opinions of the world are not worth a rush without this: If conscience can say that in our ways we seek to please God, and allow not our selves in any evil way, this testimony is full and satisfactory, and only this.

Yet further concerning this judicial witnesse of conscience: It is either about things to be done or omitted, or things already done or omitted. The judicial witnesse of conscience about things to be done or omitted is double: 1. To judge out of Gods law whether it be good or evil; 2. To counsel out of our own judgments, either to do it or forbear it according as the nature of the action is; If it be good, conscience will counsel us to do it; if bad, to forbear it. The judicial witnesse of conscience about things already done is four-fold: 1. To approve; 2. To absolve; 3. To mislike; 4 To condemne. I begin with the first, the judicial witnesse of conscience about things to be done

done or omitted: where I shall consider, first, the office of conscience in this behalf, *viz.* 1. To judge, 2. To counsel: and then the adjuncts of conscience in discharging this office.

1. Conscience judgeth of a thing to be done, whether it be good or evil, lawful or unlawful. As we try the weight of gold by a pair of balances, so conscience trieth all our actions by Gods word. It is the oracle of God: As the Jews went to Gods oracle to enquire of the Lord, so our conscience is Gods oracle to enquire of and to determine of things whether they be good or evill: It is a judge in the bosome. When the question in Corinth was, whether women should be uncovered when they pray, the Apostle sendeth them to conscience for judgement. *Judge in your selves*, saith he, *whether it be comely or no*; that is, Put it to the judgement of your own consciences. So say the disciples to the Jews; *Whether it be better to obey God or man, judge ye*; Put it to your own consciences. Thus ye see it is the office of conscience to judge of an action to be done whether it be good or bad, lawfull or unlawfull. 1. Conscience judgeth. 1 Cor. 11. 13.

2. The second office of conscience is to counsel for the doing of that which is good, forbearing of that which is evil. This is that faithfull friend in our bosome, that voice within us and *behind us, saying, This is the way; walk in it.* Mark the words there; ye see these two offices of conscience. *This is the way*; there is the judgement of conscience: and *walke in it*; there is the counsel of conscience. Nay, conscience doth not only give good counsel, but if it have leave it will bring arguments to perswade to follow it: it will tell us the thing is well-pleasing to God, of good report, that which will bring peace to our hearts. And so on the contrary, if it be evil, conscience will counsell us to forbear, yea bring arguments to dissuade; *O do it not: it will tend to the dishonour of God, and be offensive to others, and wound our souls*, &c. It was conscience that with-held David from killing *Saul*, and prest him from it by a strong argument, *O he is the Lords annoynted.* It was conscience that with held *Ioseph* from yeilding to the enticings of his Mistresse, and yeilded him an argument to dissuade him from it. *How* 2. Conscience counselleth. Isa. 30. 21. 1 Sam. 24. 10.

shall I do this great wickednesse? and so sinne against God? It was conscience that disswaded *Nehemiah* from flying, *Should such a man as I flie?* And if one argument will not serve, conscience will use more.

Nehem. 6. 11.

Use. 1. The use of this may be first for instruction. Hence we learn that natural men may have a conscience urging to good and restraining from evil. There is no man so evil or ignorant, but he hath naturally some light with him by which conscience is set on work to advise and to counsel, and to say, *This is very good; do it. This is very sinful, forbear it.* This therefore is no signe of grace in any man to have his conscience calling upon him to do good or disswading him from evil: The very heathen had so according to their light: yea and in many of them it was forcible to restrain them from many sins which they were inclined unto. And so may many men be put upon many good duties, not for any love or liking of that which is good, but because they would please and satisfie conscience, which otherwise will not suffer them to be quiet. It was conscience that kept *Abimelech* from defiling *Sarah*, and yet a carnal man.

Object. Here then a question may be asked. Whether a meer natural man can avoid sin for conscience sake.

Answ. I answer, that this expression, *For conscience sake*, may be taken two ways: either 1. For conscience of the Commandment of God and love to it; and so none but Gods children obey for conscience sake: and so it is meant when *Paul* speaketh of *being subject for conscience sake*, and *Peter* speaketh of *suffering wrong for conscience sake*. Or secondly, *For conscience sake*, that is, when conscience it self inforced by fear compelleth one to do a thing or not to do it: As we say, *My conscience will not suffer me*. Thus carnal men come to Church for conscience sake, and pray for conscience sake, &c. that is, Their conscience driveth them to these duties, and will not be quiet without they perform them.

Rom. 13. 5
1 Pet. 2. 19

Use 2. Secondly, Sith a meer natural man may have a conscience stirring him up to good as well as the truly godly, it will not be amisse to give you the difference. The difference is in three things: 1. A

1. A godly mans conſcience ſmiteth him, and ſtirreth him very kindly, ſo that he melteth before God. When *David* had numbred the People, the text ſaith, *His heart ſmote him.* The word ſignifieth it ſmote him kindly, gave him a loving blow, made him ſpread forth himſelf before God. A wicked mans conſcience giveth him a dead blow, a churliſh and ſullen blow. 1 Sam. 24. 10.

2. A godly mans conſcience ſtirreth him up reciprocally: He ſtirreth up his conſcience, and his conſcience ſtirreth up him; he ſpeaketh to his conſcience, and his conſcience ſpeaketh to him: The ſtirring is reciprocal. *Commune with your hearts, what haſt thou done O my ſoul? Thus and thus have I done,* ſaith the ſoul. Wheras a wicked mans conſcience ſpeaketh to him, but he cannot endure to ſpeak to his conſcience: his conſcience ſtirreth him, but he hath no will to ſtirre his conſcience; nay, he doth all he can to keep it quiet: But the godly as his conſcience ſmiteth him, ſo he ſmiteth upon his conſcience: *I ſmote upon my thigh,* ſaith *Ephraim.* The godly, when conſcience ſtirreth them, they ſtirre it and provoke it to ſpeak out all it hath to ſay, *Commune with your own heart, and be ſtill:* They are ſtill to give it full audience, and call upon it to ſpeak on; *What haſt thou more to ſay conſcience?* Pſal. 4. 4. Jer. 31. 19

3. A godly mans conſcience ſtirreth him to good; and he is reſolved to go to the utmoſt of what conſcience ſtirreth him unto: that with *Job, his conſcience may not reproch him all his days* for not following it: Whereas it is otherwiſe with the wicked. Job 27. 6.

3. The third uſe is this; Seeing conſcience is appointed by God to be our guide and our counſellour, it ſhould be our practice in every thing we do to ask counſell of conſcience whether we were beſt do it or no. I ſay that conſcience is Gods oracle: Whatſoever we are to do we ſhould (as *David*) enquire of Gods oracle, May I go this way to work, or ſhall I take another courſe? *Hear counſel and receive inſtruction,* ſaith Solomon, *that thou mayeſt be wiſe at thy latter end.* Conſcience is a faithful counſellour; hear it. It is the great mercie of God that thou haſt ſuch a privie counſel: Thou canſt go no where *Uſe* 3. 1 Sam. 23. 2. Prov. 19. 20.

but it is about thee to advise thee. Therefore as *Rehoboam* said to his green heads, *What counsel give you?* so say thou to thy conscience, *What advise giveſt thou, Conſcience, in this caſe? my carnall friends counſel me thus and thus; mine own carnall heart and luſts would have me go this way: but, Conſcience, what counſell giveſt thou?*

Uſe 4. 4. The fourth uſe is to reprove the cuſtome of moſt men, who with *Ahab* refuſe the counſel of that one true wholeſome Prophet, and have four hundred other counſellours who will give counſel as they would have it: They regard not this good *Micaiah*, they ſlight the counſel of conſcience; their luſts and their carnall reaſon and fleſh and blood are their counſellours; *The counſel of conſcience*, they ſay, *is not good at this time*, as he ſaid of *Achitophels*: They will hear conſcience at another time, but not now. But take heed, for if you reject the counſel of conſcience, it is becauſe the Lord hath a purpoſe to deſtroy you.

The Adjuncts of conſcience, which ſhew themſelves in the diſcharge of this duty of judging and counſelling.

The adjuncts of conſcience. THe adjuncts are of two ſorts: 1. Such as reſpect conſciences ability to diſcharge its duty; 2. Such as accompanie conſcience in the diſcharge thereof.

Of the former ſort are four:
1. An illightned conſcience.
2. An erronious conſcience.
3. A doubting conſcience.
4. A ſcrupulous conſcience.

Of the latter ſort are two:
1. A faithfull conſcience.
2. An unfaithfull conſcience.

1. An illightned conſcience. Firſt, the illightned conſcience is ſuch a conſcience as is in it ſelf rightly informed by Gods Law, and doth direct and judge aright

aright in matters both concerning our generall and particular calling, both towards God and towards man, and this illightned conſcience is a great bleſſing of God: 1. Becauſe it is the proper effect of the law of God: 2. Becauſe it is a very great advantage to a man in the whole courſe of his life when a mans conſcience is illightned to direct him in every caſe what he is to do.

If an illightned conſcience be ſo great a bleſſing, then be thankfull to God for it if ye have it, and uſe it as a bleſſing. Some have it, and uſe it not as a bleſſing; the Devils have it as a curſe; many wicked men have it as a curſe: It maketh their ſinnes the greater. Like as a colour, the more light ſhineth upon it the greater it is green is more green, and white is more white, and red more red, &c. So it is with ſinne; the more light thy conſcience hath, the greater is thy ſinne; thy drunkenneſſe is more heinous, and thy ſwearing and the like by how much committed againſt more light. Oh therefore make uſe of the light of thy conſcience as *David* did: *Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.* What followeth? *I have ſworn, and I will perform it, to keep thy righteous judgements.* Mark, when his conſcience was illightned, he bound himſelf to follow the directions thereof. *Uſe 1.* Pſal. 119. 105.

2. Is an illightned conſcience ſuch a bleſſing? O labour to get it; be not without it for a world. Thou wert better walk blindfold over narrow bridges and planks, better walk in the dark through a place full of downfals and marl-pits, then walk without a conſcience illightned. *He who walketh in the dark knoweth not whether he goeth,* John 12. 35. O labour therefore to get a conſcience illightned. It is true, a man may have an illightned conſcience and yet go to hell: but this is moſt certain, without an illightned conſcience a man cannot go to heaven. And if thy conſcience be ſomething illightned, yet labour for more light. It will prevent many a ſtumble, ſave thee from many a knock. Thou knoweſt not what caſe thou mayſt be in, what difficult ſtraits thou mayſt be put unto; if thou haſt not light in thy conſcience to direct thee, what wilt thou do? *Uſe 2.*

II. An

II. *An errone ous conscience.*

2. An erroneous conscience

SEcondly, an erroneous conscience is, when conscience not understanding Gods law, or misapplying it, doth judge amisse, and direct amisse. So *Iosephs* conscience for a while was in an errour, when *Mary* was found with child: His conscience informed him, that he must either make her a publike example or put her away privily. Here his conscience erred about this particular until the Angel had better informed him.

Mat. 1, 19.

Quest. There is a question here raised by Divines, and it is, Whether we ought to follow conscience erring or no? A question very necessary to be handled, partly because of mens ignorance in this kind, and partly because of the frequency of the case. I answer thus;

Answ. First, we must not obey conscience erring or counselling to that which is evil; For our errour of conscience doth not make the transgression of the law to be no sinne: though an erroneous conscience lead us to transgresse it. 1. Because the law of God is above conscience; and therefore the Commandment of Gods law standeth in full force, though conscience command contrary to it. Suppose a man should think in his conscience he might not take an oath, though never so lawfully called thereunto by the Magistrate, and in never so necessary a case, when as the word of God commandeth us to swear in truth, in righteousnesse, and in judgment; I must follow the Commandment of God rather then conscience, because Gods law is above conscience. 2. Because if I follow my conscience when it is in an errour, I offend not only against Gods law, but I offend also my conscience: For though for the present while conscience is erroneous it doth not take offence, yet when it cometh to see its own errour then it will. Therefore this is our first answer. We must not obey conscience erring, or counselling to that which is evil. If our conscience should counsel us to tell a lie to help our neighbour, that is evil and against Gods law, and therefore if in doing it we obey conscience, we sin.

Secondly

Secondly we anſwer, That an erroneous conſcience whatever it commandeth (though the law of God commandeth the clean contrary) yet we cannot diſobey it without ſinne. For this is a conſtant rule, we always ſinne when we diſobey conſcience: If conſcience erre not, then in diſobeying it we ſin double, againſt the law and againſt conſcience: if conſcience do erre, and we diſobey it, we ſin too; for though we do not ſinne againſt the law, yet we ſinne againſt conſcience, and ſo againſt the law too; not as though we were bound to obey conſcience when it erreth, and yet we ſinne if we diſobey it. 2.

Thirdly, Albeit it be always a ſinne to diſobey conſcience though it erre, yet it is not always a ſinne to obey conſcience when it erreth. Let us conſider three Propoſitions, and you ſhall ſee what I mean. Firſt, If conſcience think that to be commanded which is abſolutely forbidden, or that to be forbidden which is expreſſely commanded, then we ſinne which ſide ſoever we take: As if an ignorant man thinks in his conſcience that he is bound to pray to Saints departed, which thing the Lord hath expreſſely forbidden: if this man do pray unto Saints, he ſinneth, becauſe the Lord hath expreſſely forbid him to do it; if he do not pray unto Saints, he ſinneth too, becauſe his conſcience telleth him he is commanded to pray unto them. The ſecond Propoſition is this, If conſcience hold a thing indifferent to do or not to do, which yet is not indifferent, but abſolutely commanded, then it is always a ſinne not to do it, but it is no ſinne to do it. The third Propoſition is this, If conſcience hold a thing neceſſary, which God hath left indifferent, as if a man in conſcience thought that he ought to pray foure cimes a day (which thing yet God hath left indifferent) in this he is bound to obey conſcience though it erre. And it is no ſin to obey conſcience thus erring; though it be a ſin in conſcience thus to erre. 3.

The uſe of this is, I. To let us ſee what a ſacred ſoveraign thing a mans conſcience is. It is always a ſin to diſobey conſcience whether it erre or no, as it is always a ſin to diſobey God. *Uſe* 1.

God. A man can never go againſt his conſcience but he ſinneth, 1. Becauſe conſcience is our guide: It is our inward and our inſeparable guide: we can never come by any direction but by conſcience; we can never let in the Commandment of God but only by conſcience: and therefore the Lord hath made it a very ſoveraign thing. 2. Becauſe we break a commandment through the loyns of a ſinne, when we go againſt conſcience. *Ajax* light upon a beaſt and ſlew it: his conſcience thought verily it was a man; *Kill it not*, ſaith conſcience, *it is a man*: he goeth againſt his conſcience and killeth it. His conſcience here was in an errour, yet he as truly guilty of murder before God as if he had indeed ſlain a man, becauſe he ſlew a man throngh the loyns of this beaſt: His bloody mind looked at a man, and ſmote at a man, and ſlew a man. So when conſcience is erroneous, and thinketh this is a Commandment of God; it is not ſo, but he thinketh it ſo in his conſcience: if he do contrary he breaketh a Commandment though it be none, becauſe the errour of his conſcience made it one to him. Was not *Herod* truly guilty of the murder of Chriſt? He thought in his conſcience that Chriſt had been among the infants ſlain at *Bethlehem*. Thus conſcience is a ſoveraign thing: It is always a ſinne to go againſt it, erre or not erre; and if it be a ſinne to go againſt conſcience when it erreth, what a ſinne is it to go againſt it, when it doth not erre.

Uſe 2. II. This may ſerve for a word of exhortation, to exhort men to beware leſt they ſinne againſt conſcience; eſpecially when conſcience is in the right. Conſcience is as Gods face in a man: when conſcience looketh on thee, the Lord looketh on thee. It is true, the Lord looketh on thee always: but thou mayſt ſee the Lords looking upon thee when conſcience looketh on thee: And therefore thou never ſinneſt againſt conſcience but thou provokeſt the Lord to his face, when not only God ſeeth thee, but thou ſeeſt him. Thy conſcience ſheweth thee the Lord; it preſenteth God before thine eyes, commanding or forbidding, *Wilt thou do the evil now? Wilt thou omit the good duty now?* When conſcience findeth fault thou doſt now provoke

Iſa. 65. 3.

provoke the Lord to his face. If it be ſuch a ſinne to ſinne againſt conſcience in an errour, it is much more a ſinne to ſinne againſt conſcience it being in the right. Thus much of a conſcience erring.

III. *A doubting Conſcience.*

A Doubting conſcience is ſuch a conſcience as ſo hangeth in ſuſpenſe that it knoweth not which way to take: it knoweth not which is the ſinne and which not. If it goes this way to work, *It may be I ſhall ſinne*, ſaith conſcience: if that way, *It may be I ſhall ſinne too*, ſaith conſcience. Such a man ſinneth which way ſoever he taketh. The reaſon is this, becauſe he doubteth. *He that doubteth is condemned if he eat*, ſaith the Apoſtle: *for whatſoever is not of faith is ſinne.* Suppoſe a man doubteth whether it be lawfull for him to do ſuch a thing, and doubteth alſo whether he may lawfully omit the doing it; in ſuch a caſe whether he do it or not do it he ſinneth, becauſe both wayes he doubteth. Yet here theſe rules are very uſefull.

3. A doubting conſcience.

Rom. 14. 23.

1. *Rule*; When conſcience doubteth on the one part and is reſolved on the other, we muſt refuſe the doubting part and take that wherein we are certain and ſure. As for example; When one doubteth of the lawfulneſſe of playing at cards and dice; he is ſure it is no ſinne not to play, but whether he may lawfully play he doubteth: in this caſe he is bound not to play. So when on doubteth whether it be a ſinne not to call his family together every day to prayer; Gods miniſters tell him he muſt or he ſinneth: *I doubt of that*, ſaith he. Do you ſo? but you are ſure it is no ſinne to do it: Therefore you are bound to doe it becauſe you are bound to decline the doubtfull part and take that which is certain. And ſo of all other the like particulars.

Rule 1.

2. When conſcience doubteth on both ſides which is the ſin, and which not, then a man ought to do that which is moſt void of offence. As for example, Say an Anabaptiſt amongſt us doubteth whether it be a ſinne in him to bring his child to Church to be baptized, or a ſinne to refuſe; here his rule is, That that which is moſt void of offence, and moſt agreeable to brotherly

Rule 2.

therly unity and concord, is to be taken, the balance hanging otherwise even; and the arguments to urge both the one or the other seeming of like weight, then this must be put into the scale and resolve the doubt.

Rule 3 3. It is lawfull to do some things when yet our conscience doubteth of the lawfulnesse of them. For we must consider there are two kinds of doubting: there is a speculative doubting, and there is a practicall doubting. Speculative doubting is to doubt of the lawfulnesse of the thing it self to be done: Practical doubting is to doubt of the lawfulnesse of the doingof it. Now this latter is not alwayes a sinne, but the other is: As for example; If a servant be commanded of his master to attend on him on the Lords day; he knoweth not what his businesse should be, and perhaps doubteth it is not of such moment as to be done on that day; yet he hath no reason to deny his attendance: in this case though he doubt of the lawfulnesse of the thing done, yet he need not doubt of the doing of it, because he knoweth not what the businesse is, and hath no reason whereby he is able to justifie his refusal. And so much also of a doubting conscience.

IV. *A scrupulous Conscience.*

4 A scrupulous conscience. THe difference between a doubting conscience and a scrupulous conscience is this; A doubtful conscience hangeth in suspence, and doubteth which is the sinne and which is lawfull; but a scrupulous conscience inclineth to the lawfulnesse of the thing to be done, but yet not without many doubts and scruples, because of some difficulties which it hath heard of, and which it knoweth not how to answer or resolve. The rule which here we must go by is this, When we encline to the lawfulnesse of the thing, we should labour to suppresse all difficulties and ambiguities wich cause us to doubt. The Apostle includeth this rule in that word *fully*; *Let every man be fully perswaded in his heart*: Get all difficulties removed, all stumblings, and stickings, and hoverings, and scruples taken away.

Quest. But how if that cannot be done? how if we cannot get all scruples removed? If

If that cannot be done, then it is lawfull to follow conſcience notwithſtanding the doubts and ſcruples of it. Obſerve that place well, *Deut.* 13. 1. *&c.* the Lord commandeth if a falſe Prophet ſhould come amongſt them to draw them from the truth, and ſhould ſhew a ſigne or miracle to confirme his doctrine, and the ſigne ſhould come to paſſe (which might put doubts and ſcruples into their conſciences) nevertheleſſe conſcience inclining to the truth they are bound to ſtand to that: for theſe doubts and ſcruples do not argue a want of faith, but only a weakneſſe of it.

Anſw.

Duet. 13. 1, 2, 3, 4.

I. This ſheweth what need we have to labour to have our conſciences rightly informed. It is a comfortable thing for a Chriſtian to have his conſcience ſo fully illightned as that he can without doubting or ſcruple diſcharge the duties both of his general and particular calling: And it is a great diſturbance to a Chriſtians mind, when his conſcience is ſo weak and ignorant that he cannot perform his duties without doubts and ſcruples whether he is right or no, eſpecially in matters of greateſt moment. It is a great miſery to have our conſciences blind, which ſhould be our guides, and which it is a ſinne to diſobey. This is the reaſon why S. *Paul* doth ſo often ſpeak, *I would not have you ignorant*, 1 Cor. 10. 1. & 11. 3. It is a very great miſery that ones conſcience ſhould be ignorant what to do, what to hold, what to follow: I ſay, it is a lamentable miſery, that many who have followed the directions of conſcience, ſhould by it be led to death and damnation, to do things contrary to Gods word. What a miſery was it for the Jewes to have zeal and not according to knowledge? &c.

Uſe 1.

II. This ſhould teach us to uſe the means truly to inform conſcience. *Without knowledge the heart is not good*; that is, it is moſt profane. There be three means to get knowledge. 1. Let us pray unto God that he would open our underſtandings, that as he hath given us conſciences to guide us, ſo alſo he would give our guides eyes that they may be able to direct us a right. The truth is, it is God only that can ſoundly illighten our conſciences; and therefore let us pray unto him to do it. All our ſtudying,

Uſe 2. Prov 21 9 Means to get knowledge. 1.

therly unity and concord, is to be taken, the balance hanging otherwise even; and the arguments to urge both the one or the other seeming of like weight, then this must be put into the scale and resolve the doubt.

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Quest. But how if that cannot be done? how if we cannot get all scruples removed? If

If that cannot be done, then it is lawfull to follow conscience notwithstanding the doubts and scruples of it. Observe that place well, *Deut.* 13. 1. *&c.* the Lord commandeth if a false Prophet should come amongst them to draw them from the truth, and should shew a signe or miracle to confirme his doctrine, and the signe should come to passe (which might put doubts and scruples into their consciences) nevertheless conscience inclining to the truth they are bound to stand to that: for these doubts and scruples do not argue a want of faith, but only a weakness of it.

Answ.

Duet. 13. 1, 2, 3, 4.

I. This sheweth what need we have to labour to have our consciences rightly informed. It is a comfortable thing for a Christian to have his conscience so fully illightned as that he can without doubting or scruple discharge the duties both of his general and particular calling: And it is a great disturbance to a Christians mind, when his conscience is so weak and ignorant that he cannot perform his duties without doubts and scruples whether he is right or no, especially in matters of greatest moment. It is a great misery to have our consciences blind, which should be our guides, and which it is a sinne to disobey. This is the reason why S. *Paul* doth so often speak, *I would not have you ignorant*, 1 Cor. 10. 1. & 11. 3. It is a very great misery that ones conscience should be ignorant what to do, what to hold, what to follow: I say, it is a lamentable misery, that many who have followed the directions of conscience, should by it be led to death and damnation, to do things contrary to Gods word. What a misery was it for the Jewes to have zeal and not according to knowledge? &c.

Use 1.

II. This should teach us to use the means truly to inform conscience. *Without knowledge the heart is not good*; that is, it is most profane. There be three means to get knowledge. 1. Let us pray unto God that he would open our understandings, that as he hath given us consciences to guide us, so also he would give our guides eyes that they may be able to direct us a right. The truth is, it is God only that can soundly illighten our consciences; and therefore let us pray unto him to do it. All our study-

Use 2. Prov 21 9

Means to get knowledge. 1.

ing, and reading, and hearing, and conferring will never be able to do it: it is only in the power of him who made us to do it. *Thy hands have made and fashioned me: O give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.* He who made our consciences, he only can give them this heavenly light of true knowledge and right understanding: and therefore let us seek earnestly to him for it. Psal. 119. 73.

2. 2. We must seek it in humility, alwayes suspecting our own knowledge. We are not too confidently and presumptuously to trust to our own judgment, and despise or neglect the judgment of others. *The humble God will teach:* Pride and self conceitednesse blindeth exceedingly. Psal. 25. 9.

3. 3. We must seek with sobriety, always contenting our selves with that knowledge which is most necessary, and not be curious about vaine and idle-brained questions, or solicitous to answer every objection that shall be raised up against the truth. A lover of the truth should not be ready to entertain all objections against it, and never be setled till he can answer all that can be cast in; which will be never. It is not expected that there should be in every man such a ripenesse of judgment and such a measure of illumination as that he should be able to dispute with the most learned, or answer every objection that can be raised: But we must with that good Martyr say, *Though I cannot dispute for Christ I can die for him*: we must be content with our measure, to be wise unto sobriety.

Use 3. Antonius. III. Those godly souls that have weak consciences must use them very gently: *Scrupulosi non sunt rigidè tractandi*, Those that are scrupulous are not to be handled rigidly. When a mote is in the eye, it is not boistrously to be dealt withal: that will make it worse. The eye is a tender part, and so is the conscience. Again, we must take heed of offending weak consciences. It may be thou knowest thine own liberty that thou mayst do this or that; but thy brother is weak, and he doth not know it to be lawful: O take heed of giving offence: Consider the Apostles words, 1 *Cor.* 8. 12 *When ye sin against your brethren and wound their weak consciences, ye sin against Christ.* Consider also the practice of the Apostle, and the resolution that he had; *If meat*

meat offend my brother, I will eat no fleſh while the world ſtandeth, verſ. 13. It is a grievous offence to offend the conſcience of the weak; and therefore beware of it. They are very unchriſtian ſpeeches, *I know mine own liberty: If others be offended what care I? what ſhould I prejudice my ſelf for them?* It is true, another mans conſcience cannot abbridge me of my liberty: but yet I in charity ought to ſuſpend the act of my liberty when I know the uſing it will give offence to the weak.

IV. To admoniſh our ſelves if conſcience be ſo tender a thing, to be careful that we offend not our own conſciences. Conſcience is quickly offended; but it is not ſo ſoon pacified. Every notorious ſtep into evil, or neglect in duty, offendeth conſcience; and conſcience will keep a grudge a long time, and will give many a ſecret wound, deading the heart to duty, making faith and confidence in God dull: we cannot pray with courage, nor come before God with boldneſſe. *If our hearts condemne us not, we have confidence*, ſaith *John*. An erroneous conſcience will defile you; a doubting conſcience diſtract you; a ſcrupulous conſcience unſettle you: but above all other, an illightned conſcience, if it have any thing againſt you, will exceedingly diſable you; this ſtabbeth at the heart your confidence towards God. Go then and labour to purge conſcience, elſe conſcience will hinder you, whether you pray, or hear, or receive the Sacrament, &c. It will deprive you of comfort. *If thou bring thy gift to the Altar, and there remembreſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee, leave there thy gift before the Altar: firſt go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* The caſe is greater and more dangerous when conſcience hath ſomething againſt us: there is no offering will be accepted until conſcience be ſatisfied. If thou ſhouldſt be about to pray, and conſcience ſhould ſtand up againſt thee as an adverſary, and tell thee thou haſt been vain, and looſe, and carnal all this day, thou haſt not ſet thy ſelf to keep cloſe to God this day, thou haſt fallen into this and that ſinne this day; thou art not fit to pray till thou haſt reconciled thy ſelf to conſcience: Alas, thy conſcience will ſecretly undermine all thy praying

Uſe 4.

1 John 3. 21.

Ma. 5. 23.

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Use 4.

1 John 3. 21.

Ma. 5. 23.

praying. First, therefore reconcile conscience by humbling thy self, and breaking thy heart, and resolving, *I have sinned, I will do no more.* When conscience can say thy sorrow and repentance, and resolution for new obedience is sincere, then thou art fit to pray, but not before. So whatever other duty thou goest about, be sure to reconcile conscience; else all will miscarry.

V. *A faithful Conscience.*

THus I have expounded the adjuncts of conscience, which shew themselves in the discharge of its duty, namely, such as respect consciences ability to the doing of it: Which, as ye have heard, are foure: 1. An illightned conscience; 2. An erroneous conscience; 3. A doubting conscience; 4. A scrupulous conscience. Now followeth those which do accompany it in the doing of its duty: And they are two; 1. A faithful conscience; 2. An unfaithful conscience.

5. A faithfull conscience.

A faithful conscience is that which doth always advise and counsel right when need is. This is a very rare conscience: It is rare to find a conscience every way faithful. For, to say the truth, conscience is always faithful in it self; for it knoweth not how to deal deceitfully with any man: but yet I may say, as *Solomon*, *A faithful man who can find?* so, *A faithful conscience who can find?* It is a very rare thing. Not for any deceit that is in conscience it self, but because men commonly would have it unfaithful; therefore a conscience that will not let men make it unfaithful though they would, such a conscience I call a faithful conscience: and I say it is rare. But such a conscience there is; and it hath three properties: 1. It is watchful; 2. It is rigid and severe; 3. It is importunate.

Prov. 20. 6

Properties: 1. It is watchfull.

1. A faithful conscience is watchful, always awake to apprehend every opportunity of doing and receiving good, or resisting evil. As when there is an opportunity to pray, to heare, to shew mercy, a faithful conscience will remember us of it, and put us upon it: as also when there is any opportunity of quickning and edifying our selves or others. It was a watchful conscience

ſcience that made *David* ſay, *I will never forget thy Precepts:* that is, I will never omit any opportunity to remember them to do them. It was a watchful conſcience that made *Paul* ſay, *I became all things to all men, that by all means I might ſave ſome*; that is, by taking all opportunities and advantages to do good. It was a watchful conſcience that made *Peter* ſay; *I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of theſe things*; that is, I will neglect no opportunity. Again, a watchful conſcience taketh notice of every motion and inclination to evil: it is awake to ſee when evil is conceived; to tell us of it, to oppoſe it, and to diſſwade us from it: like a watchman on the top of a tower, always awake to ſee when any danger approacheth. It is Gods miniſter with eyes on every ſide, to eſpie ſeaſons of good, and ſtir up to make uſe of them; and of evil, and give warning to avoid them.

Pſal. 119. 39.

1 Cor. 9. 22

2 Pet. 1. 12.

2. As a faithful conſcience is watchful, ſo it is rigid and ſevere. In every cauſe it delivereth its judgment: nothing can eſcape its ſentence: it will not favour our luſts in any particular. If there be any opportunity of duty to God or man, it maketh us to hear of it; though it be ſuch a duty as none other will call upon us for, or it may be dare not put us in mind of; as of love, and care, and help towards inferiours; yet conſcience will: It titheth mint and cumine, and will tell us of the leaſt duty. And ſo on the other ſide, it will not ſwallow the leaſt ſinne. As it will not *ſwallow a Camel*, ſo it will *ſtraine at a gnat*. A faithful conſcience is faithful in the leaſt. If *David* ſinne but in the lap of a garment, conſcience ſmiteth him for it. It made *Abraham* ſo preciſe to a thread or a ſhoe-latchet; he would not take ſo much as that of the king of *Sodom*. It made *Moſes* ſtrict to a very hoof: It made *Paul* find fault with the Corinthians about their haire: It made *Auguſtine* condemn himſelf for an apple.

2. It is ſevere.

Luke 16. 10.

3. As a faithful conſcience is watchful and ſevere, ſo alſo it is importunate in all its counſels. It doth not only deliver its judgement, but doth with importunity urge the following of its counſel. It will have no nay, but will be obeyed. It leadeth

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Acts 20. 22. Ps. 132. 4.

eth us bound in the spirit to do it; as *Paul* said, *I go bound in the spirit to do it.* See how importunate this faithful conscience was with the Psalmist: *I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eye-lids, until I find out a place for the Lord.* It will not take any nay, say we what we will: say we be sleepy, say we be busie, say we be loth and full of excuses, it will be importunate, and that with vehemency. It will follow a man if he will not hear it, with a hue and cry of inward checks. It will sometime promise, sometimes threaten, urge us with hope, fear, danger, &c. *As we would be saved, we must do this; As we would escape the wrath to come, we must forbear that.* Thus importunate is a faithful conscience.

Use 1.

I. We see here what a great blessing it is to have such a faithful conscience, such a faithful friend in our bosome, which will be careful to tell us of all our duty, and perswade us to it; and of every evil, and disswade us from it. It will not flatter us in any thing, but tell us plainly, *This ye should do; this ye should not do.* It regardeth not what pleaseth us; but what is good for us, that it looketh to, and that it perswadeth to, and that it urgeth. O what a blessing is this! This blessing had those willing Israelites who gave so freely and largely towards the building of the Tabernacle. The text saith, that *their heart stirred them up*: and *their spirit made them willing.* Mark; *their heart* (that is, their conscience) *stirred them up*; *Ye have bracelets*; *offer them*, saith conscience: *Ye have ear-rings and jewels*, &c. *part with them too*, saith conscience, *to further this pious work in hand. Their spirit made them willing*; Their faithful friend in their bosome, conscience overcame them with arguments and strong perswasions. This is a great blessing to have such a faithful conscience: It will make a man part with all his lusts, pride, self-love, covetousnesse, carnal delights, for Gods glory and our own true good.

Exod. 35. 21.

Use 2.

II. It is a signe that God meaneth well to that man to whom he hath given a faithful conscience. O this is an Angel-keeper indeed. Did not Christ mean well to his Church in the *Canticles*, when he gave her such a conscience as carried her on wheels

Cant. 6. 12 13.

wheels unto him? *Or ever I was aware my ſoul made me like the chariots of* Aminadab, *Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return. Return, return*, ſaith conſcience; and again, *Return, return.* Hath the Lord given thee ſuch an importunate conſcience as will have no nay, will not let thee alone in omitting good or committing evill, will not let thee ſlumber and ſleepe in ſecurity, but continually joggeth and awaketh thee? Hath he given thee a ſevere, a preciſe conſcience, that will not favour thee in the leaſt evill? It is a moſt comfortake ſigne that the Lord meaneth well unto thy ſoul.

III. Labour to be a friend unto conſcience, that it may continue faithful unto thee. True friends will deal faithfully and plainly one with another, and will be importunate to do one another good: Conſcience will not deal thus with thee unleſſe thou be a friend unto conſcience. Now then are we friends unto conſcience when we do what conſcience requireth. As our Saviour ſaid to the Diſciples, *Ye are my friends if ye do whatſoever I command you*: ſo I may ſay of conſcience. For conſcience if it be truly illightned will command nothing but what Chriſt commandeth. If we deal ſo in our conſtant courſe with conſcience, be willing to hearken to it, and be ruled by it, then if we be out of the way now and then, conſcience will be true to us, and be importunate with us for our good. *Uſe 3.* John 15. 14.

IV. Be ſure thou ſtand not out againſt conſcience when once it is importunate. It is a great ſinne to ſtand out againſt conſcience though it be not importunate; but it is a ſinne a thouſand times greater to ſtand out againſt it when it is importunate. The greateſt ſtanding out againſt conſcience is the greateſt ſin: it is a ſinne which cometh neareſt that againſt the holy Ghoſt, which accompanied with ſome other adjuncts is the greateſt ſtanding out againſt conſcience. There is no ſinne that doth more harden the heart then to do evill when conſcience is importunate to diſſwade from it. This ſinne was the cauſe why *Saul* was rejected of God; *I forced my ſelf*, ſaith he: He forced his conſcience; his conſcience was importunate to have him ſtay according to the commandment of God, but he forced him. *Uſe 4.* *Maxima violatio conſcientiæ eſt maximè peccatum.* 1. Sam. 13. 12.

himself to the contrary. I confesse, if conscience be importunate to the utmost, as it is with Gods children, men cannot with any force put it by, it will have no nay. Sometimes it is so with the wicked in some particular thing: but often conscience in them is importunate, and yet will suffer it self to be born down. Now to bear conscience down is a very high sinne, and exceedingly hardneth the heart: therefore take heed of it.

VI. *An unfaithfull Conscience.*

6. an unfaithfull conscience

Thus I have handled a faithfull conscience. The second affection now followeth; which is an Unfaithful conscience. I do not mean such an one as is overtaken with evill (for the best conscience hath his failings) but such a conscience as so giveth in that it suffereth a man to forsake God, and to serve the Devil and his own lusts: This is an unfaithful conscience; and it also hath three properties: 1. It is a silent conscience. 2. It is a large conscience. 3. It is a remisse conscience.

Properties thereof; 1. It is silent.

1. A silent conscience, that conscience which knoweth how to judge, how to counsel, how to direct, yet is silent, and saith nothing is an unfaithful conscience; that knoweth what duties we owe to God and man, yet putteth us not upon them, nor is importunate for the performance of them; and so for sinnes, what we ought not to do, telleth not of the evill, disswadeth not from it, urgeth not arguments to cause forbearance; this is an unfaithful conscience. It is like to a sleepy careless coachman, who giveth the horses the rains, and letteth them runne whither they will: So this unfaithful conscience leaveth the rains on a mans neck, and letteth him run whither he will, into any danger, any mischief, that he may *do evill with both hands*. Mich. 7. 3. Do ye not think *Ahabs* conscience was fast asleep, which let him sell himself to work wickednesse? and so *Manasseh's* conscience?

2. It is large.

2. A large conscience; which maketh conscience it may be of some great duties, but taketh liberty in other which it counteth lesser. Thus *Doeg's* conscience would not suffer him to break his vow, to depart on the Sabbath day: but yet it suffred him to accuse *David*. 2 Kings 10. 29. *Jehu's* conscience made him zealous in Gods cause

cauſe againſt the houſe of *Ahab* and the Prieſts of *Baal*; but it ſuffered him to maintain the high places which *Jeroboam* had ſet up. Thus *Gamaliel's* conſcience made him ſpeak well for *Paul*, and yet continue (it ſeemeth) in much other evill. This conſcience will reſtrain from great ſtaring ſinnes, or from ſuch as the man hath no natural propenſity unto: but others which ſeeme of a lower nature, or which are ſuitable to a mans particular deſires, theſe conſcience will ſwallow without remorſe. As civil people, that cannot ſwallow down couzenage and injuſtice, and yet neglect of prayer and other religious duties never troubleth them. And ſo ſome profeſſours, who cannot omit hearing Sermons and talking of Religion, and yet can reſt without the power thereof.

3. It is remiſſe; that is, though it doth counſel and direct, yet it doth it with ſuch coldneſſe and remiſſeneſſe, that it is eaſily anſwered and put off. Thus it was with *David*. It cannot be thought but his conſcience ſaid, *Plot not againſt Vriah's life:* but he would; and ſo conſcience let him do it. This conſcience will be anſwered with every ſlight and idle excuſe: As when conſcience telleth one, *Your wayes are not good: I wiſh you to repent, and make your peace with God*; it may be the man anſwereth, *Yea, ſo I mean to do; but I cannot yet intend it: when I have diſpatch ſuch and ſuch buſineſſe then I will do it.* If conſcience ſpeak again, *Yea, but you were beſt to do it now*; *True*, ſaith he, *I know it, I know it. If God would give me repentance I would repent: It is his gift*; *of my ſelf I cannot do it.* Or when it telleth him of family duties, it may be he anſwereth, *I have no leaſure; ſo long as I go to God by my ſelf, I hope it will ſerve turn.* Or when it telleth him of his wickedneſſe, it may be he anſwereth, *Many worſe then I have found mercy; and I hope ſo ſhall* I. This is the conſcience that letteth a mans heart ſay, *I ſhall have peace* Now conſcience being remiſſe and cold, it is eaſily put off and anſwered with theſe idle and fooliſh excuſes, or with ſome other pretenſes like theſe, and ſo letteth the man go and live as before. This conſcience is like *Eli*, which ſaid, *Ye do not well, my ſonnes*, but exerciſed no ſeverity to cauſe them to do otherwiſe.

3. It is remiſſe.

Deut. 29. 19.

Uſe. By this we ſee the dangerous eſtate of thoſe men who have ſuch a conſcience. There be many who live in many ſinnes, in carnall courſes, ſome in company-keeping and drunkenneſſe; ſome in hatred and varience, ſome in chambering and wantonneſſe, ſome in covetouſneſſe and love of this preſent world: your conſciences, no queſtion, can ſay, *yee ſhould do well to be more godly, to look more after Chriſt and after heaven, and yee ſhould do well to get the truth of ſaving grace*; yet it may be they ſay nothing or nothing to the purpoſe in this behalf. Therefore is theſe mens caſe ſo dangerous becauſe their conſciences are ſo ſilent and ſo remiſſe. They have loſt the moſt ſovereigne remedy, namely conſcience. Conſcience is the moſt ſovereigne means (under God and his holy Spirit) to work repentance in men that can be; and is it not dangerous to have it prove traiterous and unfaithful? What good can the miniſtry of the Word do unto you when every idle and falſe excuſe or pretenſe which the wiſdom of the fleſh can deviſe, can ſtop the mouth of your conſcience when it calleth upon you to do what the Word requireth? It muſt needs be dangerous, and ſo much the more becauſe it is ſo pleaſing unto you: ye take delight in ſuch ſilent, and large, and remiſſe unfaithful conſciences; ye love not to have your conſciences too buſie with you, ye like not that your conſciences ſhould be too clamorous and importunate with you; ye would have them not too rigid and vehement againſt your ſinnes. It fareth with you as with many young men who have ſold themſelves unto folly, and think none their friends but paraſites that flatter them, or thoſe who connive and wink at their folly: but ſuch friends will ſoon prove foes, and ſo will ſuch moderate and quiet conſciences. It is a dangerous thing to have ſuch a ſilent conſcience; to want the chief means under God of doing a man good. It was conſcience that told the Lepers, *We do not well to hold our peace*: It was conſcience that never would let the Prodigal ſonne be quiet till he returned to his father, and ſaid unto him, *I have ſinned againſt heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſonne*: It is conſcience that is the

Kings 7.

the most powerful means under God to quicken a man up to repentance and obedience; and therefore they are in a miserable case that want this great help.

But what are the causes why mens consciences be so evil and unfaithful? *Quest.*

The causes hereof are chiefly these four: *Answ.*

1. Ignorance is one cause why a mans conscience is unfaithful, when we do not labour to have conscience throughly illightned and informed. Who are more careless and negligent of their duties both to God and man? who can with more freedome lye, steal, covet, sinne, &c. then those that are ignorant of the Law of God? they know not that they do so much hurt to their own souls as they do. An ignorant mind hath alwayes an evill conscience. It is impossible conscience should be faithful where it is not illightned: and hence it cometh to passe that conscience is so negligent and unfaithful, because we have been so careless of informing it. Thy conscience must needs be silent as long as thou art ignorant. Ignorance is soon put to silence. 1. Pet. 2. 15.

2. A second cause is, often slighting of conscience. It may be conscience speaketh not, or but coldly and remissely, because when it hath advised, and counselled, and admonished, thou hast neglected it and disregarded it from time to time. Though it judge and counsel, yet thou wilt not listen: Like *Cassandra* the prophetesse, whough her predictions were true and certain, yet were they never believed: so though conscience speaketh true, yet men follow it not; and therefore it becometh silent when it is not regarded, but all its counsel, and advise, and perswasions slighted and neglected. Hence, I say, it cometh to passe that for want of imployment it is still and falleth asleep, till the time come that it must be awaked.

3. The third cause is that violence that is often offered unto it. Many times when conscience perswadeth to any good duty, or disswadeth from any evil course, men will do against it and withstand it violently, and put off the wholesome advice of it: hence it cometh to passe, that conscience having so many injuries

ries offered unto it, beginneth to provide for its own ease, & so either it is silent and saith nothing, or else is soon answered and rebuked; as it was with *Moses*: When *Pharaoh* would never hearken unto *Moses*, but still fell to excuses, and at last to deny all, he would not let *Israel* go, notwithstanding all that *Moses* could urge, but said to *Moses*, *Get thee from me; take heed to thy self; see my face no more; Moses* then answered, *Thou hast spoken well; I will see thy face no more.* So it is with conscience; When men have been obstinate, and have refused to hear it, and would have it speak no more. *Thou hast well-spoken*, saith conscience: *henceforth I will trouble you no more, but let you alone to take your course: I will advise you no more; or if I do, I will not be any more importunate.*

Exod. 10. 29.

4. A fourth cause is, that men do wilfully stop the mouth of conscience: If it beginneth to speak, presently they busie themselves about other things; or if that will not do, they run into company, and there spend their time, that the howlings of conscience may not be heard; and if still it be loud, they strike up the drum, and ring all the bels, that the voice of it may be utterly drowned: and so conscience at last is content to stand by, to heare and see and say nothing. By this means many times it falleth out that those who have had very turbulent and clamorous consciences not suffering them to be quiet, have at last tamed them and put them quite to silence; or if they do speak, it is so coldly and remissely that they care not whether they be obeyed or no. Oh these are damnable and devillish devices! Whoever ye be that do thus, ye are in a dangerous estate, and ye carry the brands of hell and damnation upon you. If ever you desire to avoid this dangerous estate, then shun the cause: Labour to have your conscience throughly illightned and informed by the Word of God, that it may read you your duty. A friend that knoweth but little can give but little counsel. Again, give heed evermore to the counsel of conscience. You know *Achitophel* took it ill that his counsel was not followed; therefore he made away himself in displeasure: So conscience will take it very ill if its counsel be not followed

followed: it will ſtrangle it ſelf, and ſmother it ſelf; you ſhall hear no more of it. Eſpecially take heed you do not reject conſcience, nor offer violence to it: If you do, you will make it unfaithful and remiſſe; and then you loſe the beſt means under heaven of your good: Then deadneſſe of ſpirit ſucceedeth, and hardneſſe of heart taketh place, and you deprive your ſouls of all poſſibility of cure. As long as a ſick man hath any poſſibility of cure he is ſtill under hope; but if ever he loſe that, he is gone: Conſcience is the poſſibility of the ſoul to amendment; and therefore if you dull conſcience, and make conſcience remiſſe and unfaithful, you take the ready way to deprive your ſelves of all poſſibility of riſing again. Conſider theſe things, and have a care of your conſciences.

And thus we have handled the office of conſcience about things to be done and omitted, with its adjuncts, affections and properties in that behalf. I come now to conſider the office of conſcience about things already done or omitted, together with the affections of conſcience in the diſcharge of that office.

The Office of Conſcience about things already done or omitted.

THis hath foure parts: 1. To approve; 2. To abſolve; 3. To miſlike; 4. To condemne, according to the good or evil of our actions or omiſſions. The judgement is not only of the things, what they are; but whither they tend, and what they will produce.

I. *An approving Conſcience.*

FIrſt, when that which is done is good, conſcience approveth it; as *Paul* ſaith, *This is our rejoycing, the teſtimony of our conſcience,* 2 Cor. 1. 12. When he had lived uprightly and ſincerely, his conſcience approved of it; ſo when he had great ſorrow and heavineſſe for his brethren, his conſcience approved of it; *my conſcience bearing me witneſſe,* ſaith he. So at his latter end we may ſee how his conſcience approved the whole courſe of his life; *I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith, &c.* there is conſciences approbation

Rom 6, 1.

2 Tim. 4. 7. 8.

probation of him: *from henceforth*, saith he, *is laid up for me a Crown of righteousnesse*: there is consciences judgement concerning the issue of it. Conscience so approveth every particular good action done by a faithful man, that by it he may gather a testimony of the uprightnesse of his heart: as *Hezekiah*; *Remember, Lord, that I have walked uprightly before thee. Hereby we know that we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren.* Mark; Love to Gods children is a sufficient testimony, not only of our uprightnesse in that particular act, but also of the simplicity of our hearts in the general, and that we are translated from death to life. So when good old *Simeon* had now even finished his days, see what an approbation his conscience gave of him; *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word.* His conscience here gave a threefold blessed approbation of him. 1. That he had been Gods faithful servant; *thy servant*. 2. That he had walked in the ways of true peace and comfort, *depart in peace*. 3. That the promise of Gods word was his in particular; *according to thy word*.

1 John. 3. 14.

Luke 2.29

II. *An absolving Conscience.*

THe second part of the office of conscience is to absolve and acquit. Thus *Samuel* pleading his innocency, had his conscience testifying for him, *Whose oxe have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?* and his conscience absolved him as clear and free from those sins. Thus also *Job*; *If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherlesse, when I saw my help in the gate*; *If I rejoyced because my wealth is great*; *If I have not given my bread to the hungry*; *or if I have rejoyced at the misery of mine enemy: then let it be thus and thus to me.* His conscience absolved him as clear of those sins. Nay, the conscience of a child of God doth not only absolve him from the guilt of those sins which he never committed, but also from the guilt of those sins which he hath committed against God or against man. It can tell him he hath truly repented, and truly been humbled, and truly got pardon. Ye know *David* had committed divers sins: yet when he had hum-

Sam. 12 1.

humbled his soul before God, and obtained pardon, his conscience telleth him as much, and absolveth him, *Blesse the Lord, O my soul*, &c. *Who forgiveth all thy sins.* Nay, though a child of God have many infirmities daily and hourly, yet his conscience doth absolve him: *It is no more I that do it*, saith his conscience, *but sinne that dwelleth in me. If I distrust, it is no more I; for I fight against it: If I be overtaken by any weakness, it is no more I; for I laboured against it, and do bewail it.* Psa. 103. 3.

III. *A misliking conscience.*

THe third part of conscience office in things done, is to mislike if we have done ill. There be imperfections in the best obedience of Gods dearest servants: *What I do I allow not*, saith *Paul*: His conscience misliked something done by him. But that mislike of conscience which now I speak of, is of things that are ill done, that is, not done in truth and sincerity. Thus it is in all that are not renewed by the Holy Ghost: The office of their conscience indeed is to mislike what they do: When they have prayed, their conscience can mislike it, and say, *I have not prayed with a heavenly mind, a holy heart:* When they have been at a Sacrament, conscience can truly mislike it, and say, *I have not been a fit guest at Christs Table*, &c. When they are crossed and tempted, their consciences truly mislike their carriage, and say, *I do not fight and resist, but readily and willingly yield to every invitation to evil.* Do ye not think that *Jeroboams* conscience misliked his altering Gods worship, his innovating religion, his making *Israel* to sinne? do not ye think his conscience misliked him for these things? Do not ye think that *Nabals* conscience misliked his griping? and *Doegs* conscience misliked his slandering? and *Pashurs* conscience misliked his opposing and misusing *Ieremie*? and the old Prophets conscience misliked his lying? Who would have thought but *Balaam* said well, *Whatsoever the Lord saith unto me that will I speak*, and, *I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord to do lesse or more*; *no, not for* Balaks *house full of gold*; who would have thought but that this was well said? yet his own conscience could not chuse but mislike it, being not Rom. 7. 15.

spoken in sincerity. Many a man hath gone for a Christian twenty or thirty years, and every one liketh him, and yet it may be his conscience hath disliked him all the while.

IV. *A condemning Conscience.*

THe fourth part of consciences office in this behalf, is to condemne if we have done evil and contrary to Gods law. Conscience hath an office not only to mislike us but also to condemn us: nay, it will hasten more to condemn us then
Gen. 3. 7. God. We see it in *Adam*: when *Adam* had sinned, his conscience condemned him before God did: he knew that he was naked, that he had made his soul shamefully naked; his conscience condemned him for an Apostate before the Lord came to passe sentence upon him. Nay, it condemneth us oftner then God; God will condemn a sinner but once for all, *viz.* at the last day; but conscience condemneth him many thousand times before that. Many men and women who do seem godly in the worlds eyes, God knoweth how many of them have condemning consciences in their bosomes, for all their civilities, and formalities, and crying God mercie, and patched up hopes; many who would say that man were uncharitable who should condemne them for such and such, who (it may be) find conscience within so uncharitable, and saying plainly; *Ye are so*;
Tit. 3. 11. like the conscience of *Pauls* heretick, who is said to be *condemned of himself*.

Use. 1. I. This serveth for the praise of the justice of God: That he may be just when he judgeth, the Lord needeth no other witnesse against us but our own consciences: they make way for
Rom. 2, 15 the just judgment of God. Ye may see this in this portion of Scripture which we have in hand; wherein is shewed both that God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world, vers. 16. *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of all men according to my Gospel*: and then in the verse going before the Apostle sheweth that now in the mean while every mans conscience maketh way for this just judgement of God; *their conscience*

science bearing witnesse, and their thoughts in the mean time accusing or excusing one another. At the last day every man shall be judged according to his conscience; a child of God according to his; a carnall man according to his. The Lord shall absolve all his children, and their own consciences shall absolve them. The Lord shall condemne all the rest, and their own consciences shall condemne them. This is the book that every mans life is set down in: Every passage of conversation both of the godly and the wicked is recorded dayly in this book: And according to what is written therein will the Lord judge every soul at the last day, as *Rev.* 20. 12. *The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the book according to their works.* The Apostle there speaketh prophetically, and putteth the past time for the future; *they were judged*, that is, they shall be judged. So that ye see that by the judgment of conscience way is made for the just judgment of God.

II. This should be a means to keep us from sin, and to keep us in a holy life: for according to our works so will be the evidences of our consciences, whether they be good or evil. We had need to take heed what we write in our consciences; for according to what is written there, so shall we be judged. Therefore if any sinne standeth upon record in our consciences, we had need get it blotted out by the bloud of Christ. Repent, be humbled, beg for pardon, rest not till thou seest this debt-book conscience crossed, and thy sinnes stand there cancelled and discharged. *Use.* 2.

THus I have shewed you the offices of conscience about things heretofore done. Now let me shew you the affections of conscience in the discharge of these offices. Ye have heard that conscience hath foure offices in things heretofore done; 1. an office to approve; 2. an office to absolve; 3. an office to dislike; 4. an office to condemne; The two former when we have done well and lived well; then the office of conscience is to approve and absolve: The two latter when we have done ill and lived ill; then the office of conscience is to mislike and to condemne. Now followeth the affections of conscience

in the discharge of these offices; and they are foure: 1. A tender conscience; 2. A sleepie conscience; 3. A benumbed conscience; 4. A seared conscience.

1. A tender conscience.

First, a tender conscience; that is, a conscience touched with the least sinne, and checking us for the least sinne; as for vain thoughts, exorbitant passions, idle words, and the like. Such was *Davids* conscience, which smote him for cutting off the lap of *Sauls* garment. Such was *Zaccheus* his conscience, which troubled him for supposed sinnes: *If I have wronged any man*, saith he. He did not know; but his conscience was so tender that it made him carefull of *Ifs*. This tender conscience is a singular blessing of God: And if we desire to attain unto it we must labour to see the odiousnesse of sinne, yea the malignity and exceeding evil there is in the least sinne: this will make us tender of it. Secondly, we must labour to mourn for every sin though it seem little: this also will keep our consciences tender. And we have great cause to prize a tender conscience. What got the Bethshemites by not being tender in conscience? They looked into the Ark, and because they durst venture upon it, the Lord smote fifty thousand of them at once. What got the man that gathered sticks on the Sabbath for not being tender in conscience? He was stoned to death. Conscience should tender the least commandment of God, and so be tender of the committing the least sinne. This conscience is a great blessing.

1 Sam. 6. 19.

Numb 15 32. 36.

2. A sleepy conscience.

The second affection of conscience is sleepinesse. A sleepy conscience is not so quick in smiting us as it ought: either it checks not, or else with such faintnesse that it worketh not upon us, it maketh us never the more watchfull against sinne. This we see by many who can commit such sinnes without trouble or disquiet as would bring others on their knees and make them walk heavily long after. This sleepy conscience is very dangerous: it maketh men as ready to fall into the same sinnes to morrow as to day, and next day as to morrow: it letteth them see their faults, but amendeth none; because this is such a conscience as doth not cause men to feel the burden of their sinnes. A man can never come to Christ as long as he hath a sleepy conscience; because

becauſe it doth not cauſe ſin to be burdenſome. They who have this conſcience can ſleep for all it, and eat and drink and be merry for all it: Now a man can never come to Chriſt that is not burdened with his ſinne, that he cannot bear it, cannot be quiet for it, cannot ſleep for it: then Chriſt calleth him, *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will eaſe you.* Matth. 11. 28.

3. A benumbed conſcience

A benumbed conſcience; that is, ſuch a conſcience as is in a deep ſleep. This differs from the former in degree. You know there is a leſſe ſleep, and there is a greater ſleep: There is a leſſe ſleep, when only the outward ſenſes are bound; and there is a ſleep when the inward ſenſes are bound too. Now a benumbed conſcience is a conſcience that is in a deep ſleep; Preach to it, it mourneth not; cry to it, it liſteneth not: This is a benumbed conſcience. Nor the greatneſſe of ſinne, nor the wrath of God denounced againſt it can move it. Men can know themſelves guilty of ſuch and ſuch ſinnes, and yet not lay them to heart: conſcience never telleth them about it. Thus the Apoſtle ſpeaketh of thoſe *who knew the judgment of God, that they which commit ſuch things are worthy of death, yet not onely do the ſame, but have pleaſure in them that do them*: Their conſciences though informed, and in ſome meaſure knowing, the evil of their courſes and the ſeverity of Gods judgment, yet let them go on ſtill, and not only commit the evil themſelves, but delight to ſee others as bad as themſelves. Such are our ſwearers, and drunkards, and company-keepers, &c. This is a very wretched conſcience: the Lord deliver us from it. Rom. 1. 32.

4. A ſeared conſcience.

Fourthly, a ſeared conſcience; that is, ſuch a conſcience as ſpeaketh not a jot; *ſeared with a hot iron*, as the Apoſtles phraſe is, 1 *Tim.* 4. 2. a ſenſeleſſe conſcience, a paſt-feeling conſcience: when men can ſwallow down ſinnes like drink, oaths, contempt of God, his word and worſhip, mockage of Gods ſervants, hateing to be reformed; ſuch as ſinne without any remorſe. This kind of conſcience is in foure ſorts of men: 1. In diſſolute and profligate perſons; who like common ſtrumpets have their ſouls lie open to every ſinne that cometh by.

2. In

2. In obstinate sinners, such as, like *Ahab*, have *sold themselves to worke wickednesse in the sight of the Lord.* 3. In scoffers and jeerers; who *speake evil of them who runne not in the same excesse of riot* with themselves, and nickname the godly. 4. In Apostates and back-sliders; who *speake lies through hypocrisie*, and have fallen from the profession of the truth: All these men have a conscience seared with a red-hot iron. This is a great judgment of God greater then this there cnāot be No outward judgment that can fall upon us is like unto it: not the plague, nor shame, nor beggery, no nor any curse besides hell it selfe is equal to it. By this the only means under God of repentance is taken away. Such may come to repent; but it is a thousand to one if ever they do. It is like a gravestone lying upon their consciences, which keepeth them under until the day of judgment: at which time God will awaken their consciences, and then they will be more furious in tormenting then the very devils themselves.

Use. Ye that are not yet fallen upon this wretched conscience, I beseech you take heed that ye never do. But ye will ask me, *How may we avoid it?* Avoid it? alas, ye may avoid it if ye be carefull: for conscience never seareth it selfe: If ever it be seared, it is ye your selves that do sear it. Indeed the mind of man may blind its own self; and the heart of man may corrupt its own self; and the affections of man may defile their own selves: but conscience never corrupteth its self, never seareth it self. But you will say, *What must I do to avoid this searing of conscience?*

First, listen to conscience well, that what ever it saith to thee from God thou maist do it. This was the course of the Psalmist; *I will harken what the Lord God will say in me* (so some translate it.) Hear then and listen what the Lord God will say in thee, what thy conscience illightened saith in thee, and do it.

Secondly, when ever this conscience is quick follow it. Nothing more seareth conscience then suffering quicknings to die. Blow the coles if they do but smoak. As the Apostle saith,

Quench

Quench not the Spirit; ſo quench not conſcience.

I have hitherto ſhewed you that every man hath a conſcience, and the reaſons why God hath given us a conſcience, the light that it acteth by, the offices of it, and the affections of it. Now from all theſe proceed to other adjuncts of conſcience: 1. A quiet conſcience: 2. An unquiet conſcience.

A quiet Conſcience.

COncerning a quiet conſcience three things are to be conſidered: 1. What a quiet conſcience is; 2. How it differeth from that quiet conſcience which is in the wicked; 3. The examination whether we have this quiet conſcience or no.

I. For the firſt, What a quiet conſcience is; It is that which neither doth nor can accuſe us, but giveth an honourable teſtimony of us in the courſe of our lives and converſations ever ſince we were regenerate (I put that in too: for, 1. we do not begin to live till we be regenerate, and 2. we can never have a true quiet conſcience till then.) Such a quiet conſcience had good *Obadiah*; *I feare the Lord from my youth*, ſaith his conſcience: This was a very honourable teſtimony that his conſcience gave him. Such a quiet conſcience had Enoch: *Before his tranſlation, he received this teſtimony, that he pleaſed God.* Haymo ſaith, this teſtimony was the teſtimony of Scripture, *Gen.* 5. 24. where it is ſaid that he *walked with God.* This is true; but this is not all: The text ſaith not there was ſuch a teſtimony *given of him*, but *he had it*: and that *before his tranſlation*; but that *before his tranſlation*; but the teſtimony of *Moſes* was after his tranſlation: Therefore it was the teſtimony of his conſcience that bore witneſſe within that he pleaſed God. So that this is a quiet conſcience, which neither doth nor can accuſe us, but giveth an honourable teſtimony of us in the whole courſe of our life and converſation. Now to ſuch a quiet conſcience there be three things neceſſary: 1. Uprightneſſe, 2. Purity, 3. Aſſurance of Gods love and favour.

1 Kings 18. 12.

Heb. 11. 5.

Dicente ſcripturâ inquis ille.

First, Uprighneſſe is when a man is obedient indeed. Many will

will be obedient, but they are obedient, not indeed, not humbled indeed, not reform'd indeed. What it is to be obedient indeed, see *Exod.* 23. 22. *But if thou shalt indeed obey his voyce, and do all that I shall speak* &c. Mark; that is obedience indeed when we do all that God speaketh, and are obedient in all things. This is an upright conscience, when the heart is bent to obedience in all things. An
Act. 23, 1. example we meet with in Paul; *I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.* His conscience could not accuse him of any root of wickedness and corruption allowed and cherished in him: That is an upright conscience. Hast thou such a conscience as this, *My conscience can truly bear witnesse there is no sinne I favour my selfe in, allow my selfe in, but condemne all, strive against all.* Thus David proveth that his conscience was upright; *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.* The regarding of any iniquity will not stand with uprightnesse.

A second thing required to a true quiet conscience is purity. Though our heart be upright and stand generally bent to the Lords will, yet if we be guilty of some particular sinne this will hinder the quiet of our conscience. Therefore saith Paul, *I*
1 Cor. 4. 4. *know nothing by my self*; that is, nothing to accuse me; no corruption, no root of unbeliefe reigning in him: Infirmities he had many, and frailties, he had many, and he knew them, but he knew nothing to accuse him. Whatever was amisse in him, his conscience told him he used all holy means against it. If thy conscience can truly say thus also of thee, then hast thou a truly quiet conscience.

Thirdly, Assurance of Gods love, favour, and pardon. Though we have fallen into great sinnes, yet our consciences may have quiet if we can be truly assured of Gods love and favour in the pardon of them. The Apostle proveth that the *sa-*
Heb. 10. 2. *crifices* of the law could not *purge away sinne*; but onely Christs bloud can do it. His argument to prove it is this. Because those sacrifices could not free a man from *having conscience of sinne*; they could not purge the conscience: but Christs bloud can: After assurance of Pardon in Christs bloud conscience can no more

more condemne for sinne, how many or how great soever the sinnes were which have been committed. These are the three things required to a true quiet conscience.

Furthermore a quiet conscience implieth two things: 1. A calmnesse of spirit: 2. A chearfull, merry and comfortable heart. These two I mean when I speake of a quiet conscience.

1. A calmnesse of spirit, or a quietnesse of minde, not troubled with the burden of sin nor the wrath of God, nor terrified with the judgments due unto sinne. This quietnesse and calmnesse of spirit is promised to all them that truly hearken unto Christ and obey him; *who so harkeneth to me shall be quiet from fear of evil.* Pro. 1. 33.

2. A chearfull, merry and joyfull heart. When our conscience giveth a comfortable testimony of us, it cannot but make our hearts joyfull. *This is our rejoycing, the testimony of our conscience,* saith *Paul*: The comfortable testimony which his conscience gave of him made him to rejoyce. A wicked man cannot truly rejoyce: no, though he be merry and joviall and laugh, yet his carnall estate is a *snare*, he can have no true joy; *but the righteous sing and rejoyce*, Prov. 29. 6. No mirth like the mirth of a good conscience. All other joy is but outside, painted, seeming joy: That is only true joy that is rooted in the comfortable testimony of an upright good conscience, which telleth a man his peace is made with God, and that whether he be in sikneſse or in health God loveth him, *whether he live or die he is the Lords.* Thus yee see what a quiet conscience is. 2 Cor. 1. 12.

How a quiet conscience in the godly differeth from the quiet conscience that is in the wicked.

THe second thing propounded to be considered about a quiet conscience, is, How it differeth from that quiet conscience which is in the wicked. 1. I confesse that the wicked seem to have a very quiet conscience: Many thousands of carnall people seem to live and die in quiet. Look into ale-houses,

lewd houses, into all places; who so merry and brisk, and heart-whole (as they say) as they who have no saving grace? Yet 2. this quiet conscience in them must needs differ from the quiet conscience of the children of God. Certainly the Lord will not *give the childrens bread unto dogs*; neither will he smile upon their soules; neither doth he pardon the sinnes nor accept the persons of the ungodly: And therefore if they have a quiet conscience, it must needs differ from that in the godly. Must not copper needs differ from gold? And we who are the Lords messengers must teach you the difference: *They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profaine.* Now the question is this, Wherein lyeth the difference between the quiet conscience of the righteous and the quiet conscience of the wicked? *Answ.* The difference between them lyeth in foure things: 1. In the thing it self; 2. In the cause; 3. In the effect; 4. In the continuance.

Job.21.23.

Ezek. 44.23.

I. In the thing it selfe. The quiet conscience in the godly is double; not onely apparentiall and nominall, but reall and substantiall: it is quiet and quiet too, peace and peace too: *I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace.* Mark; *peace* and *peace* too; peace in appearance, and peace in truth and substance also. But the peace and quiet of conscience which the wicked have is not such peace: It is peace and no peace; peace in appearance, but no peace in truth. Their god is the god of this world, and he perswadeth them they have peace: But *my God*, saith the Prophet, speaketh otherwise: *There is no peace to the wicked saith my God.* They talk of a good conscience sometimes, and boast they have a good conscience; but the truth is, they cannot have true peace within: for saith the Prophet, *the wicked is like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* So doth a wicked mans conscience secretly cast up mire and dirt in his face: His peace can onely be outward and apparentiall.

Isa.57.19.

vers. 21.

II. There is a difference in the cause. The quiet of a good conscience ariseth from one cause, and the quiet of a bad conscience ariseth from another.

1. The

1. The quiet of a good conscience ariseth from a distinct knowledge of the word of God, and of the precepts and promises conteined in it: But the quiet of an evil conscience ariseth from ignorance: When men know not God nor his holy word, which should bind conscience, they fear nothing because they see nothing; they know not the danger of sin: Like a blind man standing before the mouth of a cannon, he feareth no danger because he seeth none: so carnall men fear not because they know not what cause they have to fear. Their very *prayers* that they make are *an abomination to God*, and they know it not: their good duties they do are all like *cockatrices egs*, and they know it not; they know not that they are *in the bond of iniquity*, in *the snare of the devil*. Their consciences are quiet because they know not what cause they have to be otherwise. This is one difference; The quiet and peace of a good conscience ariseth from light and from knowledge; the quiet and peace of an evil conscience, from darknesse and ignorance.

2. The quiet of a good conscience ariseth from a due examination of our selves by the word, and purging of our consciences. Conscience never can be good without purging and sprinkling; no nor without a due examination: the quiet of a good conscience arised from this. Whereas the quiet of a wicked mans conscience ariseth from want of this: He never examineth his conscience, but letteth it sleep till God awake it with horrour. I say, a wicked mans conscience sleepeth, and that maketh it quiet, and he is not troubled nor molested with it. Like a baillif or sergeant fallen asleep by the way; the desperate debtour whom he lieth in wait for, may passe by him then, and find him very quiet, and not offer to arrest him: or like a curst dog fallen asleep; a stranger may passe by him then and not be meddled with: Such like is this quiet evil conscience. Heb. 10. 22.

3. The quiet of a good conscience ariseth from a good ground, from the works of Gods Spirit, from true saving grace, from righteousnesse. Rom. 14.17. we reade of *righteousnesse* and *peace*: True peace of conscience ariseth from righteousnesse: whereas the false peace of the wicked ariseth only from vain

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Iſa.57.19. *I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace.* Mark; *peace* and *peace* too; peace in appearance, and peace in truth and ſubſtance alſo. But the peace and quiet of conſcience which the wicked have is not ſuch peace: It is peace and no peace; peace in appearance, but no peace in truth. Their god is the god of this
verſ. 21. world, and he perſwadeth them they have peace: But *my God*, ſaith the Prophet, ſpeaketh otherwiſe: *There is no peace to the wicked ſaith my God.* They talk of a good conſcience ſometimes, and boaſt they have a good conſcience; but the truth is, they cannot have true peace within: for ſaith the Propher, *the wicked is like the troubled ſea which cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt.* So doth a wicked mans conſcience ſecretly caſt up mire and dirt in his face: His peace can onely be outward and apparentiall.

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hopes and conceits; *They are not guiltie of such and such great sinnes*; or, *They are not so bad as some others*: As the Pharisee's conscience was quiet; why? *God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are, no drunkard, extortioner, nor like this publicane.* Or perhaps from this ground their peace ariseth; *The Lord is very mercifull*; and, *The Lord Jesus died for sinners.* Or perhaps this is their plea, *They are good comers to Church; They have prayers in their families; They have been professours of Christ Jesus so many years*: From hence they dream of peace upon false grounds, whenas *the way of peace they have not known.* When conscience shall be awaked, then it will tell them how they have by flattery deceived their own souls, and that having no true righteousnesse they could have no true peace.

4. The quiet of a good conscience ariseth from tendernesse and from life. Therefore the Apostle joyneth together, *life* and *peace*, Rom. 8. 6. True peace of conscience ariseth from life: whereas the quiet of a wicked conscience ariseth from searednesse and benumbednesse and deadnesse, when men being past feeling of sinne are not troubled at the committing of it. Thus ye see the second thing wherein the difference lieth, namely in the cause.

III. They differ in the effect. First; The effect of the quiet of a good conscience is comfort and rejoycing: *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* What followeth? *By whom we have accesse by faith, rejoycing*, &c. Mark; The peace of conscience bringeth forth rejoycing. And so in other places *peace* and *joy* are joyned together. But the evil conscience, though quiet, wanteth this rejoycing. If carnall men had no more mirth then what the quiet and peace of their consciences doth help them to, they would not be so merrie as most of them be. Secondly, Another effect of true peace of conscience is, It sanctifieth the soul, it purgeth the heart, purifieth the life, and reformeth the whole man. It is the instrument whereby God sanctifieth his people more and more: *The God of peace sanctifie you wholly.* Observe the title which the Apostle there giveth unto God when he sanctifieth his people,

Rom. 5. 1.

Rom. 15. 13.

Gal 5. 22.

1 Thess. 5. 23.

ple, he calleth him *the God of peace*; he ſanctifieth his people by peace: It maketh them think thus, *We muſt not do this or thus as others do; we ſhall loſe the peace of our conſcience if we do.* This makes them ſtrive againſt ſinne, deny their own wills and carnal appetites, *If I ſhould not do ſo I ſhould have no peace.* This peace ſanctifieth: But the peace which carnall men ſeem to have doth not ſanctifie the ſoul: they are never the more holy for the ſame. Again, another effect of the peace of a good conſcience is to put life into us in the performance of good duties: it maketh us with gladneſſe and delight perform the duties of our generall and particular callings: But the falſe peace of an evil conſcience ſuffereth the wicked to be dead and dull to good duties. The true *peace keepeth* our *hearts* and our *minds*: We ſhould loſe our minds in the things of this life, but this peace doth keep them upon God; we ſhould loſe our hearts upon our profits and pleaſures and affaires in the world, but the peace of conſcience doth keep them upon heaven: Phil. 4. 7. *The peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and minds.* This doth the peace and quiet of a good conſcience: but the quiet of a wicked mans conſcience doth not do thus; it keepeth not his mind in this manner, but it is upon earthly things for all that.

IV. They differ in reſpect of duration and continuance. The quiet of a good conſcience is ſettled and grounded in the godly; it never faileth them nor forſaketh them; the other peace is fading. Let a feeling Sermon come and riſle carnall men, it taketh away their peace from them; their conſciences then flie in their faces, and then they ſee they are not right; Let loſſe of outward things come and light upon them, or any other affliction, it taketh their peace from them; conſcience then breaketh out upon them and ſheweth them how they have deceived themſelves with falſe peace, eſpecially at their death, then an evil conſcience (that hath been quiet before) in ſtead of comforting will affright and amaze them. But if we have the quiet of a good conſcience, it will make us heare the word with comfort, and not to be troubled & diſquieted by a ſearching

ing ſermon or the threatings of Gods judgments: Nay, if we be in trouble, this will quiet us; if in affliction, this will comfort us: It wil endure al our life, & be preſent at our death; then eſpecially it will ſhew it ſelf a friend unto us, in ſtanding by us to chear and refreſh us. Pſa'. 119. 165. *Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing ſhal offend them*, ſaith *David*. nothing ſhall offend them or take away their peace: it is an eternal & everlaſting peace. Thus you have ſeen how the true and falſe peace of conſcience differ.

But here cometh a queſtion to be anſwered, and it is this; Have all Gods children this peace of conſcience? I dare ſay ſome of you look for this queſtion, and long to have it anſwered. I anſwer therefore, No; they have it not always. Job ſeemed one while not to have it: Job. 7. 20. *I have ſinned*, ſaith his conſcience: *what ſhall I doe unto thee, O thou preſerver of men.* David ſeemed one while not to have it: *Mine iniquities are gone over my head as a heavie burden; they are too heavie for me*, Pſal. 38. 4. His ſinnes lay heavie upon his conſcience for a fit. Hezekiah one while ſeemed not to have it: *Behold, for peace I had great bitterneſſe.* And therefore I ſay the children of God have it not alwayes. But let me tell you; They might have it alwayes. 1. It is poſſible they ſhould have it alwayes: Their ſinnes of ignorance and infirmitie do not break the peace of their conſciences: cannot; for if they could, then no man ſhould have true peace of conſcience at any time. Nothing but willing and witting ſins, ſinnes againſt conſcience, can break the peace of conſcience: and as it is poſſible for the children of God to live without theſe, ſo it is poſſible for them alwayes to have peace; yea, they may have daily more and more peace. 2. As it is poſſible for the children of God alwayes to have peace, ſo they are commanded to keep their peace alwayes; and it is their own fault if at any time they loſe it; Job. 22. 21 *Acquaint thy ſelfe with God, and be at peace*, ſaith Eliphas. So, Col. 3. 15. *Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, unto which ye are called.* We are not onely commanded to *have peace in our hearts*, but alſo that it may *rule* there, that no corruption perk over it to hinder it; we are *called* to this peace, and commanded to have it; and therefore as it is a ſin

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in the common-wealth when one breaketh the peace, ſo it is a ſinne in the ſpirit to break the peace of conſcience; we are all bound to the peace. 3. If the children of God have it not alwayes, then they feel the want of it; and in the want of that comfort nothing elſe will comfort them. It is not all the peace and proſperity of the world that can comfort their hearts as long as they have not this peace; not all the mirth in the world can content them untill they enjoy this peace again, the peace and quiet of a good conſcience; they faint for it, and long after it, they can have no ſtrength without it; *The Lord will give ſtrength unto his people; the Lord will bleſſe his people with peace.* Pſa. 29 11. It is not ſo with corrupt hearts; they can be without peace, and yet never faint; they can eat and drink for all that, & ſleep & be merry for all that, yea & go about their profits and their earthly buſineſſes as roundly as ever for all that; But the children of God if they want the peace of conſcience, they have no ſtrength to do any thing almoſt, they faint til they have it again. 4 The godly always have the ſeeds of it in them; *Light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſſe for the upright in heart.* Pſa. 97. 11 Mark; it is ſown in their hearts, and it will ſpring up at one time or other to chear them and to comfort them. As it is with the wicked; they may ſeem now and then to have true peace, but they have the ſeeds of horrour alwayes in them, which will ſprout forth at laſt, and then they ſhall find the worm of an evil conſcience again; ſo on the contrary ſide, the godly may ſeem now and then to have no peace, but yet they have alwayes the ſeeds of true peace in them, which will in time ſhew themſelves, and ſolace their ſouls for ever. 5. They never want peace as the wicked do want it. The wicked want it, and have no poſſibility of having it; they go in ſuch *paths* as wherein they ſhall never *know peace*, ſuch paths as will never lead them unto it; ſtill their conſcience is able to ſay, they are not right, they are carnall and not ſpirituall; they know no true peace of conſcience, neither can they; But the children of God walk in ſuch wayes as will bring them to true peace of conſcience ere they have done. Iſai. 59. 8.

By this you ſee what a good and quiet conſcience is. It cannot

not be but that all must like it, and wish, *O that we had it!* Beloved, let us labour to get it and the assurance of it. No blessing under heaven is like it; It is a heaven upon earth. Happy are they who can shew they have it: and miserable are they who have it not. *Dulce nomen pacis.* Sweet and pleasant is the very name of peace, especially of the peace of a good conscience; If ye have it, no misery can make you miserable; and if you have it not, no happinesse can make you happy. It is Christs legacy which he bequeathed to his Church; *Peace I leave with*
Joh. 14. 27 *you, my peace I give unto you.* It is glorious and honourable: Beest thou never so mean in the world, thou art glorious if thou hast this peace; beest thou never so despised and disgraced among men, thou hast honour enough if thou hast this peace; Rom. 2. 10. *To every one that doth good, glory and honour and peace.* Mark how it is accompanyed; namely, with glory and honour; But shame and confusion and dishonour is upon all them that have it not.

III. *Examination, Whether we have a quiet conscience.*

COncerning a quiet conscience I propounded three things: 1. What it is; 2. How it differeth from that quiet conscience that is in the wicked; 3. The examination whether we have this quiet conscience yea or no. The two former we have handled already: namly, What a quiet conscience is; and, How it differeth from that quiet conscience which is in the wicked. Let us passe on now unto the third, namly, to an examination of our selves whether we have a true quiet conscience yea or no.

A quiet good conscience is such a marvellous blessing that it cannot possible be but we must like it and wish, *O that we had it.* Let us then examine our selves and see whether we have it or no. Many have peace and quietnesse (as hath been shewed already) arising from false grounds: they have peace of conscience because they know not what belongeth to trouble of conscience; or if they know that a little (as some of the wicked

ed do) yet they do not conſider that ſorrow which one day will burſt in upon them and ſinck them utterly: Let us trie then our peace by theſe notes.

I. If the quiet of our conſciences be good, it is ſuch as we have carefully ſought for at the mercies of God in the bloud of Jeſus Chriſt, when being pinched with the burden of our ſinnes we did fly to the promiſes of God to ſeek comfort, to the bloud of Chriſt, to find eaſe and to get aſſurance of Gods favour. If our peace come not this way, it is naught, and we were better to be without it then have it. It may be we ſpeak peace to our ſelves; but doth the Lord ſpeak peace to our conſciences? *I will hear what the Lord will ſpeak: for he ſhall ſpeak peace to his people, and to his Saints: but let them not turn again to folly* (for that will break all their peace.) O go to God then, and hear whether he ſpeaketh peace to your conſciences; whether it be *God in Chriſt reconciling the world to himſelfe* that ſpeaketh it to you. It is not true peace without we have ſought for it at the throne of grace, without it be peace of Gods making. Now the Lord ſpeaketh peace to his people who came to him for peace three wayes. 1. He ſpeaketh peace to them by his word. This ſpeaking is thus; When the word promiſeth peace to thoſe who walk by ſuch a rule, and they walk by that rule, then Gods word ſpeaketh peace to their ſouls. The rule is ſet down Gal. 6. 15. *In Chriſt Jeſus neither circumciſion availeth any thing nor uncircumciſion, but a new creature:* and then followeth, *As many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them.* 2. God ſpeaketh peace to his people in their conſciences. This ſpeaking is thus; When the conſcience can ſay, *I am in Chriſt, I am engraffed into Chriſt*, then the Lord ſpeaketh peace by the conſcience, *peace be with you all that are in Chriſt Jeſus:* ſo alſo when the conſcience can ſay, *I hunger after righteouſneſſe, I truly mourn for ſinne, I deſire in all my wayes to pleaſe God.* Thirdly, God ſpeaketh peace by his Spirit. This ſpeaking is thus; When the word hath ſpoken peace by the promiſe, and when the conſcience ſpeaketh, *I am thus and thus qualified, and therefore I have peace*, then the Spi-

Pſa. 35. 8.

1 Pet. 5. 14.

rit of God cometh in and witneſſeth, *Yea, you ſay right; peace belongeth unto you indeed, and I ſay Amen to it.* When the Spirit of God doth ſay thus, then the Lord ſpeaketh peace to the
Gal. 5. 22. ſoul. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.* Peace is the fruit of the Spirit: it ſpeaketh it to the ſoul, breedeth it in the ſoul. Now, beloved, examine your ſelves: Is your peace of this ſtamp? do ye ſeek it of God, and get it in the bloud of Chriſt Jeſus? do ye get it by the world, and by your true ſpeaking conſcience, and by the holy Spirit of God? If ye get it on this wiſe, then it is true peace of conſcience indeed. If ye get it by your own vaine hopes and by your good meanings, &c. this peace will not hold alwayes: when your conſciences come to be awaked, your peace will all vaniſh away and be no more. This is the firſt note to trie and examine your ſelves by.

II. If our quiet and peace of conſcience be good, it is accompanyed with ſuch a life as is agreeable to the will of God: it avoideth ſinne, as the thing that diſturbeth the peace. How can any man have true peace of conſcience when his life doth not pleaſe God, but provoketh his wrath againſt him? It cannot be that he ſhould have true peace who in his heart doth regard ſinne: *There is no peace to the wicked, ſaith my God.* No, where-ever true peace of conſcience doth inhabit, it dwelleth with godlineſſe of life and unblamablene ſſe of converſation; as the Apoſtle *Peter* joyneth them together, 2 Pet. 3. 14. *Wherefore, beloved, ſeeing ye look for ſuch things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace without ſpot and blameleſſe.* Mark the words; *In peace, Without ſpot and blameleſſe.* If ever we would be found in true peace, we muſt live without ſpot and blameleſſe. A wicked mans conſcience may ſeem to have peace,
Prov. 7. 14 and tell him he hath ſerved God; *This day I have payed my vowes,* ſaith the conſcience of the Whore; but this is a rotten and deceitfull peace. True peace of conſcience is ever accompanyed with ſuch a kind of life as is agreeable to the will of God in his word.

III. If our peace be good, it will make us endure to hear any

any point in Gods word with joy and delight. A wicked heart can hear points of mercy and comfort with joy: ſo long his peace laſteth: *Every man that calleth upon the name of the Lord ſhall be ſaved*; *If we confeſſe our ſinnes, God is juſt to forgive us our ſinnes*; *If any man ſinne, We have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous*; *Whoever ſhall confeſſe that Jeſus is the Sonne of God, God dewelleth in him and he in God*: Such points as theſe a wicked heart can read with delight (though if they were truly opened and expounded they would yield him cold comfort, yet he can hear them with delight in the lump:) But if a ſearching point or ſome terrible point cometh, he is afraid to hear that. *Ahab* had a quiet conſcience but only when *Michaiah* did preach: *Felix* had a quiet conſcience no doubt; yet he trembled to hear *Paul* preach of *death* and of *judgment*, Acts 24. 25. One would have thought that *Paul* (a priſoner) ſhould rather have been afraid: but *Paul* had true peace of conſcience, and therefore he could think and ſpeak of death with great comfort, and of judgment with joy; So could not *Felix*, Beloved, this is a ſtrong ſigne of a falſe peace, when ſome points of Gods word lay us flat and bereave us of our hold. Ye ſhall have many ſay, *O they have ſuch peace, and they have ſuch a good conſcience, as quiet as can be, and as heart-whole as can be*: By and by a ſound ſearching point cometh and ranſacketh them to the quick, and they are gone. I confeſſe they go and get ſome untempered morter or other, and dawb up their conſciences again; but they are gone for the time. This is a ſtrong ſigne of a rotten peace. But a child of God can hear any point, hear of death, of judgment, of any thing contained in the word, with delight and comfort. It is true, he may be amazed thereat: but he is glad at heart that he heareth it, and will make uſe of it, be it mercy or judgment. Sweet or bitter points all are welcome to him: even the bittereſt points are ſweet to him, becauſe God and he are at peace; and therefore he knoweth there is no news from God but it is good.

IV. If our peace of conſcience be good, it will heal that baſe

fearfulnes which is in many: who dare not be in the dark, dare not go through a Church-yard in the night, Some will quake at
Job 15.21 the very ſhaking of a leaf, as the wicked in *Job*: which is nothing but a guilty conſcience. I grant this fearfulnes is natural to ſome; yet I ſay the true peace of conſcience will cure it. I do not ſay this is a reciprocall ſigne of true peace of conſcience: for many wicked men may be bold enough: but I ſay true peace of conſcience will cure this immoderate fearfulneſſe in the godly.

But here two queſtions are to be asked. 1. Whether every true child of God that hath true peace of conſcience can think of death with comfort and be deſirous to die.

Anſw. 1. Peace of conſcience doth not take away natural fear. It is the nature of every living creature to be very fearfull of death. The Philoſopher calleth death φοβερῶν φοβερώτατον, *the fearfuleſt thing of all fearfull things.* Bildad calleth it *the king of terrours.* Nature loveth its own preſervation; and therefore
Job. 18.14. feareth the deſtruction of it. Peace of conſcience doth not take away all this feare. 2. Beſides, peace of conſcience doth not take away alwayes all degrees of ſlaviſh fear of death. The reaſon is, becauſe peace of conſcience may be weak, mixed with much troubles of conſcience. For as faith may be very imperfect, ſo peace of conſcience may be in ſome very imperfect: Good old Hilarion was very fearfull to die: He cryed out to his ſoul when he lay on his death bed. *O my ſoul, haſt thou ſerved Chriſt theſe foureſcore years, and art thou now afraid to die?*
1 Ioh 4.18 Again, a mans love may be very imperfect. *Perfect love indeed caſteth out feare*; but imperfect love doth not. Hezekiah had peace of conſcience; *Remember Lord,* ſaith he, *I have walked*
2 Kings 20.3. *before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart.* Mark; He had the peace of a good conſcience; his conſcience told him he had a ſincere heart, and that his wayes pleaſed God: yet he was afraid to die: I do not think it was onely becauſe he had no iſſue, though that might be ſome reaſon of it. 3. When a child of God is afraid to die, it is not ſo much for love of this life as out
Pſa 39 13 of a deſire to be better prepared. This made David cry out, *O ſpare me, that I may recover ſtrength, before I go hence and be no more*

more. And ſo Job; *Let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go, whence I ſhall not return.* Theſe good men were then ſomething unwilling to die: They might have many reaſons; moſt likely this was one, That they might be better prepared, and more fit and ready for their departure. 4. Some of Gods people; as theſe, Job and David, at other times; I ſay, ſome of Gods people have ſuch marvellous peace with God as that if it were Gods will they had much rather die then live; I *deſire to be diſſolved,* ſaith Paul, *and to be with Chriſt; which is farre better.* It may be in regard of the Church, or the care of their children and charge God hath laid on them, they could be content to remain ſtill in the body: nevertheleſſe, they account their ſtate after death much better; and, were it put to them whether to die or to live longer here, they would chooſe death rather of the twain. Nay, Elias *requeſted for himſelf that he might die*: *It is enough, Lord: take away my life.* Not that they love death it ſelf; for death is evil in its own nature, contrary to nature, a badge of ſinne: but for the love they have to and the aſſurance they have of eternall life after death. 5. Nay there is no child of God but may truly be ſaid to love death, and to love the day of judgement and the appearing of Chriſt Jeſus. Divines uſe to put this as a ſigne of Gods children: Nay, the Apoſtle maketh this as a propertie of Gods children, *to love Chriſts appearing: I have fought a good fight,* ſaith Paul, *I have finiſhed my courſe*: There he telleth us of his own peace; and then he telleth us of his reward; *From henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſſe, which the Lord the righteous Judge ſhall give me in that day; and not to me onely, but to them alſo that love his appearing*: that is, to all his children: For all the children of God love the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt to judgement. Though all do not deſire it with the ſame ſtrength of faith, yet all deſire it with faith. They believe that Chriſt hath *deſtroyed him that hath the power of death, which is the devil*; they beleive Chriſt hath taken away *deaths ſting, which is ſinne, and ſwallowed death up in victory*, and may all ſay, *Thanks be unto God who hath given us victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

Job 10.20. 21.

Phil.1.23.

1 Kings 19.4.

2 Tim.4.8

Heb.2.14.

1 Cor.15. 56. 57.

Neither

Neither do they ſo much queſtion thrs as their faith to beleive it; ſaying, *Lord help our unbelief.* 6. Gods children have good reaſon to do ſo, and to check their own hearts when ever they do otherwiſe. When ever any diſturſt cometh, they ſhould check it down, again: when ever any fear ariſeth, they ſhoud ſay, *What? I fear death? Which is a thing ſo precious? Precious in the ſight of the Lord is the death of his Saints. Is death precious, and ſhall I be ſo vain as to fear it?* Thus ye ſee an anſwer to the firſt queſtion, Whether every child of God that hath true peace of conſcience can be deſirous to die.

Pſal. 116. 15.

II. *Queſt.* Whether a wicked man that hath no peace of conſcience may not be deſirous to die too? *Anſw.* 1. The horrour of conſcience may make a wicked man deſirous to die. He may have ſo much horrour of conſcience as that he may think certainly hell cannot be worſe: (Hell is infinitely worſe; but he may not think ſo.) Thus Judas was deſirous to die, when he went and hanged himſelf: Thus many in deſpair do make away themſelves, I confeſſe ſome in deſpair may be fearfull to die: as Cain was fearfull to die; it was fear of death made him ſpeak thus unto God, *It ſhall come to paſſe that every one that findeth me ſhall ſlay me*, Gen. 4. 14. The reaſon was, becauſe, though he were in deſpair, yet he was not ſo ſenſible of his horrour as Judas was: for Cain could go and build for all this, and train up his children in muſick and the like for all this; but Judas was in a caſe more ſenſible of his miſery. 2. Dolour of pain may make a wicked man deſire to die. Thus it was with *Saul*: *Saul* had received his deaths wound and was in moſt grievous paine: he could not die preſently, neither could he live; but lying in very great pain between both, deſired the Amalekite to ſtand upon him and ſlay him, 2 *Sam.* 10. 9. (though *Oſiander* think the Amalekite lyed unto *David* to curry favour with him; but *Joſephus* and others think he ſpake the truth.) Sure it is, that many wicked wretches having no peace of conſcience to ſweeten and allay their torments, have been deſirous to die: nay ſome have haſtened their own death. 3. Malecontentedneſſe, and ſhame, and diſappointment of their aims may alſo make wicked

Mat. 27 5.

ed

ed men deſirous to die, and, if death come not ſoon enough of it ſelf, to diſpatch away themſelves with cruel ſelf-murder Thus it was with Achitophel: when he ſaw his counſel was not followed he haltered himſelf: He had no peace of conſcience to comfort him againſt all his dumps and diſcontents; and therefore he was deſirous to die. 4. Wicked men, being vexed at ſomething for the preſent, may ſeem to be deſirous to die; and yet if death ſhould come indeed, they ſhould be of another mind, and be content death ſhould be further off. Nay, Jonas (that ſtrange man of a good man) O for a fit he would be dying yea that he would, *Lord take my life from me: for it is better for me to die then to live.* I ſuppoſe if God had taken him at his word, he could have wiſhed his words had been in again. But thus it is often in the mouthes of wicked people; *I would I were dead*; and, *I would I were out of the world*: not for any peace of conſcience they have, nor for any deſire of death, but onely for a momentany pang. If they were to die indeed, they would be loth enough to it. Like the man in the Fable: who being wearied with his burden of ſtiks, lay down and called for death; but when death came indeed to take him, and ſaid, *What ſhall I do, man? thou calleſt me*: I *pray thee*, ſaid he, *help me up with my burden of ſticks.* When he was to die indeed, then he would rather have his own weariſome burden. It is but a fable; but this is the faſhion of many. 5. When wicked men are deſirous to die indeed ſometimes not out of diſcontent or any ſuch like reaſon, yet it connot be out of any true peace of conſcience: They may go away like lambs, as we ſay; but it is in a fools paradiſe. It may be whileſt they lived they thought to go to heaven; but *when they dy, then all their thoughts periſh*, as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaketh in another caſe.

2 Sam. 17. 2 2.

Jon. 4. 3.

To return therefore where we left; O beloved, is there any of you that want the peace of a good conſcience? and do ye know what you want? what a great benefit and bleſſing? That ye may ſee this, and fully know it, and by knowing it, earneſtly deſire it, conſider,

Firſt, that it is the very head of all comforts. A worthy Di-

vine

vine calleth it *Abrahams boſome to the ſoule*: Ye know what a bleſſing it was unto Lazarus to be taken from his ſores into Abrahams boſome: The peace of a good conſcience is like this boſome of Abraham: who would not gladly lie in it? Such a man who hath it can never look upon another mans comfort, but a good conſcience will ſay, *Yea, and I have my comfort too.* When Paul was commending of Timothie, ſee how his own conſcience ſpake of himſelf at the ſame time: *He worketh the work of the Lord, as I alſo doe* Mark; his conſcience would be putting in comfort for himſelf: *Doth Timothy work the Lords work? yea and ſo do I too,* ſaith his conſcience: It is Muſculus his obſervation upon the place.

1 Cor. 16. 10.

Secondly, A quiet conſcience maketh a man to taſt the ſweetneſſe of things heavenly and ſpirituall: It maketh the word to be to him, as to David, *Sweeter then hony, yea then the hony-combe: I have not departed from thy judgements, O Lord,* ſaith he (thus ſaith his conſcience:) now what followeth next? *How ſweet are thy words unto my taſt! yea, ſweeter then hony unto my mouth.* A good conſcience maketh a man taſt ſweetneſſe in prayer, when his conſcience telleth him he prayeth aright: It maketh him taſt ſweetneſſe in a Sabbath, when his conſcience telleth him he ſanctifieth it aright: ſo alſo in the Sacrament, when his conſcience can witneſſe he receiveth aright. What is the reaſon ſo few of you taſt ſweetneſſe in theſe things? The reaſon is this; Becauſe ye have not the peace of a good conſcience: It would find ſweetneſſe in every good dutie, in every good word and work.

Pſal. 119. 103.

Thirdly, A good quiet conſcience maketh a man taſt ſweetneſſe in all outward things, in meat, in drink, in ſleep, in the company of friends: it putteth a *Better* upon a very *morſel*, Prov. 17. 1. Brown bread and a good conſcience, there is a *Better* upon it then upon all the coſtly fare of the wealthie without it. Bernard calleth a good conſcience *a ſoft pillow*: Another calleth it *a deare boſome friend*: Solomon calleth it *a continuall feaſt*. It maketh a man taſt ſweetneſſe in every outward thing. The healthy man onely can take pleaſure in recreations, walks,

walks, meats, ſports, and the like: they yield no comfort to thoſe that are bedrid, or ſick, or half-dead. But when the conſcience is at peace, the ſoul is all in good health; and ſo all things are enjoyed with ſweetneſſe and comfort.

Fourthly, It ſweeteth evils to a man, as trouble, croſſes, ſorrows, afflictions. If a man have true peace in his conſcience, it comforteth him in them all. When things abroad do diſquiet us, how comfortable is it to have ſomething at home to chear us? ſo when troubles and afflictions without turmoil and vex us and adde ſorrow to ſorrow, then to have peace within, the peace of conſcience, to allay all and quiet all, what a happineſſe is this? When ſickneſſe and death cometh, what will a good conſcience be worth then? Sure more then all the world beſides. If one had all the world, he would then give it for a peaceable conſcience. Nay, what think ye of judgement, and the tribunal of Chriſt? Do but think what a good conſcience will be worth then? When *Paul* was accuſed and hardly thought of by ſome of the Corinthians this was his comfort; *I know nothing by my ſelf*, ſaith his conſcience: I *count it a very ſmal thing to be judged of you.* Nay, he goeth further: His conſcience telleth him he *hath the Lord* Jeſus (who juſtifieth him) *to judge him*; he hath a ſweeter Judge then his own conſcience, even his Saviour, to judge him. O there is no created comfort in the world like the comfort of a peaceable conſcience. The heathen Menander could ſay, ἕρροιτοῖς ἅπασι συνείδησις θεός, *Conſcience is a little pettie god.* We may not give it ſuch a big title: but this is moſt certain; The conſcience is Gods echo of peace to the ſoul: in life, in death, in judgement it is unſpeakable comfort. 1 Cor. 4. 3, 4.

Is there any then that want this? Let them above all things labour to get it: It is more worth then all things elſe. Whatever we neglect, let us not neglect this. It is ſafer to neglect bodie, health, meanes, maintenance, friends, and all that ever we have in the world then to neglect this. The more we have the worſe it is for us, if we have not this. Had we all this worlds good, it is like a ſtone in a ſerpents head or a toads head, or a pearl in an oyſter; not our perfection, but our diſeaſe. *Exortation.*

Again, you who have a peaceable conſcience, 1. labour to maintain it. Be often in communion with God, be not ſtrangers to him, the light of whoſe countenance is the peace of your ſouls. It is the walking with God that breedeth true peace and preſerveth it. It is ſaid of *Levi*, that *he walked with God in peace.* Mal. 2 6. O let us ſtirre up our ſelves to walk cloſe with God, that ſo we may have peace: No ſweet peace but in ſo doing. 2. We muſt take heed we do not trouble nor diſquiet it, that we do not reſiſt it, or offer violence unto it by committing ſinne againſt the peace of it, but endeavour to maintain the peace of it by obaying the voice of it. Get the fear of God, which is wiſdome; and to depart from evil, which is true underſtanding: *All her paths are peace*, Prov. 3. 17. We cannot walk in any one path of true wiſdome but we ſhall find in it peace: There is peace in humilitie, and peace in charity, and peace in godlineſſe, and peace in obedience, &c. Break any of theſe things, and ye break the peace. Ye heare what an admirable thing the peace of conſcience is: O then, if ye have it, make much of it, nay, if ye have it, ye will for certain make much of it. The very having of it will teach you the worth of it, and learn you to prize it, and make you above all things unwilling to leave it. And thus much of the firſt, *viz.* a quiet conſcience.

An unquiet Conscience.

I Have already handled a quiet Conscience. I come now to speak of a troubled and unquiet conscience: Concerning which I shall shew you three things: 1. What it is; 2. The degrees of it; 3. The difference of the trouble that may be in a good and that may be in a bad conscience.

1. What a troubled conscience is. It is a conscience accusing for sinne, and affrighting with apprehensions of Gods wrath, And here I would have you consider two things: 1. What are the causes of it; 2. Wherein in consisteth. What it is.

First, The causes of it are these five. 1. The guilt of sinne: When a man hath done evil, and his conscience doth know it, then doth the conscience crie guiltie: *when he knoweth it,* saith the text, *then he shall be guilty.* This is it which woundeth and pierceth conscience; this is the sad voyce of conscience. Like Judas; *I have sinned in betraying the innocent blood:* Like Cain; *My sinne is greater then can be forgiven.* So the brethren of Joseph; *We are guilty,* say they, *concerning our brother.* It is like the head of an arrow sticking in the flesh, or like a dreadfull object continually presenting it self before our eyes: *My sinne is ever before me,* saith David. When we have transgressed Gods law, and our conscience can cry guiltie, when the guilt of sinne lieth upon conscience, this is one cause of the trouble of it. *Levit.5.4.* *Gen 42.21* *Psal.51.3.*

2. Another cause is the apprehension of Gods wrath for sinne: When knowing that we have sinned and offended God, we apprehend his wrath in our minds, and behold the revenging eye of his justice against us. This is a very grievous thing, so terrible that no man or angel is able to abide it: As we see the Kings and Potentates, the mighty men of the earth, *call for the mountaines to fall upon them and the hills to cover them from the wrath of God* Rev.6.15.16. When we have incurred Gods displeasure and our consciences see it, when his

anger resteth upon us and our consciences feel it, this is another cause of the trouble of conscience.

3. A third cause of the trouble of conscience is the fear of death and of hell: When we know we have offended Gods law, and we know also what our sinnes do deserve, namely death and judgement and damnation for ever; this doth most trouble and disquiet conscience, when it fastneth on the apprehension of it. The Apostle calleth it *a fearfull looking for of judgement*, When conscience looketh for nothing else but for hell and damnation, this must needs trouble conscience.

4. Another cause is privative, want of supportance; when God doth with-hold from conscience the help of his Spirit. Ye know the Spirit can inable conscience to undergo all its troubles; the Spirit can prompt it with mercies and the promises of God, and hold it up: but when the Lord bereaveth the conscience of this help, and doth not at all support it, this must needs also trouble conscience.

5. When God doth fasten on the conscience such thoughts as may affright and terrifie it; as thus, *God doth not love me*; *Christ will not own me*; *I have sinned, I am a reprobate, past hope*, &c. When such thoughts as these fasten on the conscience, it cannot choose then but be troubled. Thus I have shewed you what are the causes of the trouble of conscience.

Secondly, This trouble of conscience consisteth in two things: First, in want of comfort: It cannot apply to it self neither the promises of this life nor of that which is to come. Conscience crieth, *This belongeth not to me*: *This mercy, this comfort is not my portion.* Secondly, In a terrour and anguish of mind from these three heads: 1. From the guilt of sinne; 2. From the apprehension of Gods wrath; 3. From fear of death and of judgement. This is the three-stringed whip wherewith conscience is lashed. These ye shall find upon the conscience of Adam and Eve, when they had sinned against God. Their conscience was whipped. 1. With the guilt of sinne; *they saw they were naked*, Gen. 3. 7. 2. With the apprehension of Gods wrath; *they hid themselves from the presence of God*, vers. 8. 3. With the

the fear of some vengeance which they began to look for; *I was afraid*, saith Adam, verse 10. This three-stringed whip ye may see also was upon the conscience of Cain after he had slain his brother: His conscience was whipt. 1. With the guilt of sinne; *My sinne is greater then can be forgiven*: 2. With the apprehension of Gods wrath; *From thy face, O Lord, am I hid*: 3. With the expectation of death and of judgement; *It shall come to passe that every one that findeth me shall slay me*. Thus I have shewed you what a troubled conscience is.

The degrees of a troubled Conscience.

II. THe next thing I promised to shew is the degrees of a troubled conscience. A troubled conscience hath divers degrees: For some consciences are more troubled then other some. 1. The first degree is such a degree as may be in Gods children: and this ariseth not so much from the apprehension of Gods wrath as from the guilt of sinne: Their consciences grieve and are troubled to think that they have sinned and offended the Lord God. Thus we see David could not be at quiet: Although Nathan had told him from God that his sinne was forgiven, yet his conscience still troubled him: *Against thee onely have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.* Psal. 51. 4. saith he. I grant the consciences of Gods children are troubled at the apprehension of Gods anger; but then it is his fatherly anger, not the anger of an enemy. Though for a fit they may seem to apprehend that too, yet mostly it is for that they have provoked their loving Father to anger against them. A father may be angry with his child out of love; and so the Lord may be with his dear children. *The Lord was angry with me too*, saith Moses, Deut. 1. 37. *O let not my Lord be angry* saith Abraham the father of the faithfull. *O God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry with thy people that prayeth* saith the Psalmist. Psal. 80. 4. Sometimes the Lord is angry with the prayers of his people; but it is in love, because he would have them pray better, and obey better, and look to their standing better. Now

the conſciences of Gods people are very much troubled when the Lord is thus angry with them.

2. The ſecond degree of trouble of conſcience is ſuch as is in the wicked, and yet not altogether without hope. The conſcience is troubled, but yet ſo as it conceiveth hope : *God is mercifull* ; and, *Chriſt died for poore ſinners*, &c. Thus many a wicked man is troubled and affrighted in conſcience, nor for ſinne, but for the wrath of God againſt it ; yet he conceiveth for the preſent that the ſinne is pardonable and may be forgiven : *Chriſt may forgive* ; *God may pardon*. It is indeed but a poore ground of hope and comfort upon poſſibilities : but yet this lightneth the trouble in the mean time, and it may be within a while ſhaketh it quite off : Like the wicked Jews, Iſa.57.10. who were wortied and *wearied* moſt grievouſly ; *yet they ſaid not, There is no hope*. There may be much horrour and diſquiet in theſe conſciences for a time : but there is a higher degree yet, a worſe troubled conſcience then this.

3. The third degree of a troubled conſcience is, when it is for the preſent altogether hopeleſſe ; ſuch a conſcience as is ſwallowed up in deſpair : when men thinking of their manifold ſinnes, of the direfull wrath of God, of the dreadfull torments of hell for ever, their conſciences make them deſpair of all hope or poſſibilitie of avoiding this ; bringing ſuch thoughts as theſe, *What a deal of time have I ſpent in ſinne, wherein I might have made my peace with God, and have prevented all this? What a great and omnipotent God have I offended? What an infinite Judge have I provoked, who is able to revenge himſelf on me, and who will be my foe to eternity?* Conſcience alſo bringing in thoughts of the torments and unſufferable pains to be endured in hell, and ſuch ſwallow up in deſpair without all hope for the preſent or the future. Like the wicked man which Eliphaz ſpeaketh of, *He believeth not that he ſhall return out of darkneſſe*, Job 15.22. So theſe have no hope of eſcaping, expect to periſh as Spira ; *O*, ſaith he, *In envy Cain and Judas : I would I were in their caſes : They are damned* ; *but I ſhall be worſe for evermore*. Now though to theſe all hopes be gone for the preſent,

Deſperatio eſt homicida animæ. Aug.

present, yet some of these troubled consciences scramble up again with vain hopes, and some do not. Cain got up again, it should seem: but Judas did not. Those that never get up again, either first, they live in intolerable horrour and vexation of spirit, as if they had a devil in them to put them to anguish, and often (being weary of their lives) do make away themselves, and so leap quick into hell: or else second, they runne desperately into all abominable courses: Their consciences telling them there is nothing to be expected but damnation, they give themselves desperately to commit sinne with greedinesse, saying with them in Jeremie, *There is no hope; therefore we will walk after our own devises*, Jer. 18. 12. Or else 3. they grow senseless of it. They see they are wrong, but they are not sensible of it. It may be they pray and reade and heare; but their consciences secretly whisper, *All is to no purpose*. Conscience eateth and eateth like a worm, and they *pine away in their iniquities*, as the Prophet speaketh. A kind of sorrow they have, but they cannot mourn; a kind of sad dolour, but they cannot weep: *Ye shall not mone nor weep, but pine away in your sinnes*, saith the text. I confesse there be more presumers in the world, who promise themselves that all shall be well with them: but yet there be despairers too, and very many, whose consciences are troubled with secret despair; though it may be not apparently to others.

Desperare est in infernum descendere, Isid.

Ezek. 24. 23.

Now the causes of these despairing consciences are these. 1. The greatnesse of sinne; when the heart thinketh secretly thus. *Certainly the Lord cannot find in his heart to forgive me.* As it was with Cain: When he had lived in earthly mindednesse, and then in formality, and then in discontent and in hatred, and then in hardnesse of heart, the Lord rebuked him, and yet his heart was so hard that still he went on in evil; then he murdered his brother; and lastly he despaireth: *My sinnes are greater*, saith his conscience, *then can be forgiven.* He thought God could not find in his heart to forgive him. So when men sinne and sinne, and the Lord doth rebuke them, and yet they do sinne, and their consciences do check them, and

Gen. 4. 13.

yet they go on, at last they come to have secret despairs in their heart, that God now will not look towards them; whereas if yet they had a mind to stoop to Jesus Christ, they might be forgiven. 2. A second cause of despairing is multitude of temptations. Indeed the godly should not be so apt to think themselves forsaken of God by reason of temptations as sometimes they are: they should rather *count it joy*, as James speaketh, chap. 1. 2. But yet many of the wicked despair finally by this means: Because they do so often fall into temptations, therefore they conclude they are forsaken of God. 3. Ignorance of Gods word. When the guiltinesse of sinne meeteth with minds not instructed in the doctrine of free grace and reconciliation by Christ; this is a cause of despair. 4. So also inured custome of sinning is another cause. When men are often quickned, and grow dead again; then quickned again for a fit, and then hardned again: in the end they fall to despair. These and the like are the causes of despairing consciences. And thus I have shewed also the second thing propounded to be handled, namely, the sundry degrees of troubled consciences.

III. The third thing is the difference between the troubled conscience in the godly and in the wicked. The consciences of Gods children may be troubled, and are many times; and the consciences of the wicked they are troubled too: now the question is, How do they differ? I answer,

1. That trouble in the conscience of wicked men is accompanied with impenitency, and sometimes with blasphemy: *I would I were able to resist God*, saith Francis Spira: like those in the Revelation, who *blasphemed God because of their torments*. Sometimes it is accompanied with cursings, as Isai. 8. 21. sometimes with infinite murmuring. But in Gods children it is not so: When their conscience is troubled, they justifie God, and clear God, and give him the glory of all, and submit under his hand, and subdue their hearts unto him: as David in his trouble did not fret and murmure against God, but saith he, *If God have no pleasure in me, lo, here I am: let him do with me what seemeth him good*. So that the trouble of conscience

2 Sam. 15. 26.

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in the children of God and in the wicked doth much differ in this firſt reſpect.

2. The trouble of conſcience in the wicked ariſeth onely from the apprehenſion of Gods wrath and fear of judgement for ſinne, not for the ſinne it ſelf and from the love of holineſſe: But that in Gods children ariſeth chiefly for ſinne, and the want of the apprehenſion of Gods love unto them: *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?* Pſal. 13. 1. Mark whence the trouble of the Pſalmiſt came: This was his trouble, that God did hide his face.

3. Trouble of conſcience in the wicked never maketh them part with ſinne, never breedeth a hatred of ſinne in them; but that in Gods children doth. True it is that a wicked mans troubled conſcience may make him vomit up his ſinne, like a dog that vomiteth up his troubleſome meat: but he doth not vomit up his ſtomach to that meat; for when the trouble is over he returneth to his vomit again. So a carnall man returneth to his deadneſſe of heart again, and to his ſecuritie again, when the trouble is over. Pharaoh, whileſt his conſcience was troubled at the ſenſe of Gods judgements, O then ſaith he, *I have ſinned: I pray, Moſes, let me have your prayers; and I will let you go.* If the children of Iſrael could have packed up and departed while this trouble had laſted, they might have been gone, But *when he ſaw there was reſpite, he hardned his heart again.* Mark; His trouble of conſcience did not make him part with his ſinne: But that in Gods children doth. Exod. 8. 15

4. That in the wicked driveth them from God: They have little heart to come unto him: They ſee nothing but wrath; and they rather go about to ſeek eaſe in other things then to ſeek his favour: as Saul ſought eaſe in muſick, and Cain in building caſtles and cities, and Judas in a deſperate courſe. Their trouble fetcheth them not to God. But the trouble in Gods children worketh otherwiſe: In the the midſt of trouble of conſcience they reſt upon God as Heman crieth, *O Lord God of my ſalvation,* in the midſt of the troubles of his ſoul. Pſal. 88. 1.

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soul. The eyes of Gods children are still towards heaven; they think still they should have some help from God: They pray and cry, and though God seemeth to neglect them, yet they cannot give over: They will not be beaten off from waiting on God when he will speak comfort to them.

5. That trouble that is in the wicked maketh their heart sullen; but that in the godly melteth their heart: *My soul is like melting wax*, saith David in his troubles of conscience. His soul melted before God, and was even poured out before him, Psal. 22. 13. This is a kindly working. Thus ye see the difference.

Uses.

Use 1. 1. BY this we see what a miserable thing it is to have such a troubled conscience. It is the greatest misery that can be: it is even a hell to men here upon earth: it is like a dismall ghost to terrifie the soul: it is like a burning furnace in the bosome: it maketh the life bitter. In a word, the spirit of man is not able to bear it: *The spirit of man will sustein its infirmities: but a wounded spirit who can bear?* As long as a mans spirit is sound, it will bear any thing. Some have born agues, fevers, stones, colicks, convulsions, rackings, torturings: as long as a mans spirit is sound he is able to bear any of them, all of them: *but a wounded spirit who can bear?* Never was there man that was able to bear a wounded spirit. We may see by many of Gods children how heavy it is: David *rored with the anguish* of it: a strange phrase. Heman was ready even to runne out of his wits with it: *While I suffer thy terrours*, saith he, *I am distracted*, Psal. 88. 15. Ethan complaineth that it was like a burning fever: *How long, O Lord wilt thou hide thy face? for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?* Psal. 89. 46. If it be thus with Gods children what may we think of the wicked? If we could search into the bosomes of some wicked men who are enemies to God, then we might see and understand the true weight and burden of this troubled conscience,

Prov. 18. 14

conſcience. Cain crieth out of *more then he can bear*. Judas thought to find more eaſe in hell then in his own heart: So terrible was the torture of his troubled conſcience, that he murdered himſelf, thinking verily that hell could not be worſe.

Vſe 2. 2. See here what an infinite miſery every ſinner ſhall one day be in. Though he be not troubled with this harpye for the preſent, though he be not yet gaſtered with this furious hag; yet the day will come when he ſhall: I ſay the time will come when all ye that are wicked ſhall be haunted with this helliſh agony of a troubled conſcience; either here before ye die, or when ye die, or at the furtheſt when your ſouls are departed out of your bodies: This is unavoydable to all that live and continue in ſinne. Though for a while ye live in mirth and pleaſure and ſecuritie, and conſcience letteth you alone; though like Nabal to day ye feaſt and make merry; yet there is a conſcience within you, an Abigail which to morrow will tell you of it, and then your hearts will *die within you and be like ſtones*, as cold and as heavie as a ſtone within you. As Samuel met with Saul, *Becauſe thou haſt forſaken the Lord, the Lord alſo hath forſaken thee*: So conſcience will find you out. However for a while ye ſlight and neglect it, or elſe perhaps ſuppreſſe it, yet it will find you out, as Eliah did Ahab, and then ye will ſay as he did, *Haſt thou found me, O mine enemy? yea, I have found thee: Thou haſt ſold thy ſelf to work wickedneſſe in the ſight of the Lord: thou haſt been a profane beaſt, thou haſt runne againſt heaven, and againſt God and Chriſt; and thy life hath been full of rebellions*, &c. *now I have found thee out*. The day will come when thy conſcience ſhall be like Jobs meſſenger. Ye know what news the meſſengers brought Job; firſt news of one great evil, and then of another greater, and then of a third worſt of all; cattel and goods taken away, ſervants dead, ſonnes and daughters dead, *I onely am left alive to tell thee*: So I ſay, the time will come when conſcience ſhall thus report, *Thy pleaſures are dead; thy profits are dead; thy comforts are dead; thy heart is dead; thy ſoul is curſed, and muſt die for ever; and I onely am left alive to tell thee*:

And then he shall crie out, *Cursed was I that ever I was born: and cursed be the womb that bare me: and the paps that gave me suck.* Then shalt thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy bodie are consumed, and thy conscience shall say, *How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? I have not obeyed the voyce of my teachers, nor enclined mine ears to them that instructed me.* Such dolefull messages conscience will bring in one day; and then it shall hisse like a Snake in thy bosome, *Know now that for all these things thou shalt come to judgement.* And so thy conscience shall bray thee like a fool in a mortar, as it were with a pestill, and it shall pounce thee and beat thee and distresse thee for evermore. This is the moth that getteth into the cloth, and doth eat it: *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquitie thou makest his beautie to consume away like as when a moth fretteth a garment.* This will make thy face gather blackness, and thy spirit be over-whelmed for evermore.

Psal. 39. 11

I must adde another use yet: For all this is the law: and untill ye be in Christ ye are all under the law, the curse of it, the rigour of it: And we are bound to tell you how ye shall find it if ye do not submit to the righteousnesse of Christ. But though we do preach it *in the hand of a mediatour*, saith Paul, Gal. 3. 19. a terrible killing law, but yet in a mercifull hand, in the hand of a mediatour, to drive us to seek for mercie: and therefore

Use 3. The third use shall be, to call upon you to be humbled, and to see that there is no living for you in your sinnes. Go and stoop to Christ Jesus, who onely can purge your guiltie consciences by his bloud. I beseech you consider, ye who yet abide in your sinfull estates and are yet in the flesh: I beseech you, consider what the event will one day be. If ye will not look out, your consciences will find you out at the last, and then wo be to you. Your consciences will make all things grievous and bitter to you, even those things which in themselves are most sweet and good: When ye heare of heaven, of mercie, of the bloud of Christ, these will but encrease your miserie: conscience

ence will ſay, *You have no part in them.* When you heare the word, any promiſe or comfortable paſſage in it, your conſcience will ſay, *Yea, this is my miſerie; I have no ſhare in theſe things.* This will be a hell unto you, and will torment you before your time. This will alſo make all outward good things bitter unto you: When you ſee wife and children and friends, then conſcience will whiſper and ſay, *I ſhall not have theſe long: ere long I ſhall have none but damned companie.* When you ſee your goods, eſtates and the like, conſcience will mutter, *Alas, ere long I ſhall be in a place where a drop of water ſhall not be afforded me to cool my tongue.* When you ſee the light and other comfortable objects, *O wo is me; I ſhall ſhortly be in a place where I ſhall ſee nothing but darkneſſe, utter and everlaſting darkneſſe.* Conſcience will make your affl ctions intolerable, your ſickneſſe intolerable, your death-bed intolerable, the face of death intolerable. I beſeech you, brethren, conſider theſe things, you that have not felt a troubled conſcience untill this houre, Ye hardly know yet what it is: ye will know it to your ſorrow, if you do not conſider it. There is a phraſe in *Ezek.* 30. 24. where God ſaith, he will make Pharaoh *grone with the gronings of a man deadly wounded:* So it will be with you, if you will n t hearken and ſubmit to Jeſus Chriſt; conſcience will make you grone with fearfull grones; *O wo is me, I am undone, without hope, without remedie.* Conſider this therefore and be wiſe, before the things which concern your peace be hid len from you.

Exhortation.

And let me the rather exhort you to this in regard of the danger of the times. The Lords wrath is gone out, and his judgements do flie through the earth, and his plagues do fall on every ſide of us: What will your guilte conſciences do now? oh you can never endure them. Ye had need of purged conſciences now leſt ye be quite comfortleſſe in the day of viſitation. How miſerable is their caſe who want the peace of conſcience in the time of diſtreſſe? When troubles and affl ctions are without, then how grievous is it to want peace and comfort within? When Gods mortall arrows are in your bodies, then to have

the arrow of his wrath ſticking in your ſouls, this will adde ſorrow to ſorrow, and make your eſtate much more uncomfortable and unſupportable. Beloved, peace of conſcience is good at all times; but it is moſt precious when calamities fall on us: Then to have the peace of a good conſcience that may bring us good news from heaven, that all is well within, all peace there, this is ſuch peace as all the world cannot give nor ſell nor buy. Never more need of the peace of conſcience then now. As one
M. M. ſaid of the books of Faith, *There be abundance of books written of faith: buy them all up*, ſaith he; *ye will need every one of them ere long*: So may I ſay of whatever may forward the peace of conſcience; Buy it, purchaſe it, get it, as much peace as you can poſſible: ye will have need of it all ere long. Take heed of troubling your conſciences or clogging them with guilt, leſt the Lord caſt you off, and leſt ye be hardned, and ſo ye periſh from the right way. Do not think thus, *O we are believers, and have no need of ſuch threatnings*. He who is certain of his ſalvation knoweth aſſuredly he ſhould be damned if he ſhould go
Ezek. 18 26. on in ſinne without repentance; This *If* is true enough; *If the righteous forſake his righteouſneſſe, all his former righteouſneſſe ſhall be forgotten.* And, *Woe is me*, ſaith Paul, *If I preach*
1. Cor. 9. 16 *not the goſpel.* In the ſtate of innocencie there was uſe of threatnings: ſo is there now in the ſtate of grace. The Lord threatned Adam in innocencie, *If thou eat thereof thou ſhalt die the*
Iob 31. 23. *death.* Job was awed by threatnings not to lift up his hand
Pſal. 119. 120. againſt the fatherleſſe; *for* ſaith he, *deſtruction from God was a terrour to me. My fleſh*, ſaith David, *trembleth for fear of*
Heb. 12. 28 *thee, and I am afraid of thy judgements. Let us have grace*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *whereby we may ſerve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.* Why? *for our God is a conſuming fire.* For be it that Gods children (that is, all believers) ſhall never fall finally away; yet this threatning is one of Chriſts inſtruments whereby he keepeth them from falling: and they alſo may taſt of much bitterneſſe if they grow indulgent to their corruptions. O therefore take heed of this curſe, that your conſciences may not dog you with the guilt of ſinne and the apprehenſion

henſion of Gods wrath. You will never be able to bear it, much leſſe in the time of affliction. O it is good being in a drie houſe when a great tempeſt is up : and it is ſafe being in a good harbour when a ſtorm beateth hard. A good conſcience is good at all times; but O how ſweet then ! When Jonah fell into affliction, the want of peace in his conſcience made him look upon his affliction as upon hell, as though he had been in the belly of hell : *They who follow lying vanities, forſake their own mercies*, ſaith he. Mark ; his conſcience dogged him with his fleeing from God, and forſaking his own mercies. Ye ſee he was miſerably diſtreſſed by it till the Lord did deliver him. Be charie then of conſcience, and get it purged, that it may ſpeak peace to you in trouble.

4 *Queſtions.*

NOw J have declared unto you, What a troubled conſcience, is; What is the cauſe of it, and wherein it conſiſteth; How many degrees there be of it; How the troubled conſcience of the godly differeth from the troubled conſcience of the wicked; the miſerie of a troubled conſcience; and, What a deal of miſchief it doth one, eſpecially in affliction : now J ſhould leave this point, but that there be ſundrie queſtions to be anſwered about it.

I. Suppoſe a man be rid of this trouble, and have peace of conſcience, how ſhall he maintain it, and keep out troubles from it ?

II. Whether and how the peace of our conſcience dependeth upon our care and obedience ?

III. What manner of obedience it is that peace of conſcience doth depend on ?

IV. If a man have no peace, but onely a burdened conſcience, what muſt ſuch a man do to be freed from it and to attain true peace ?

I. Queſtion ; *How a man may keep peace of Conſcience.*

I begin with the first: Suppose a man have peace of conscience, what must he do to keep and maintein it? I answer.

First, We must labour to prevent troubles of conscience by taking heed that we do nothing contrarie to conscience. We must not be drawn by friendship, or credit, or the love of any lust, to do that which conscience forbiddeth. Nothing should be so dear unto us as the peace of conscience: nothing for the love of it should make us do ought against our conscience. How miserable are those comforts, delights, satisfactions which we get to our selves in such courses as our own hearts do condemne! However they seem comforts, for a while, and contentments for a while, and delights for a while, yet at last it will appear that miserable comforts are they all. Nothing that we get in any evil way will chear and comfort us in a time of need. What said *Francis Spira* at the time of his death, when seeing his wife & children about him, and thinking on the goods and estate which he had got for them by denying the truth which he had before mainteined against the Romish errours, he cried out in the horrour of his conscience, *How terrible is the sight of these unto me!* However before they had been comforts to him, yet now he could not endure the sight of them. *O* thought he. *I recanted for your sake; I yeelded to superstition and it was long of you*: Therefore he abhorred now the sight of them. Wretched is he that alloweth himself in any course which his conscience findeth fault with. It is a good rule the Apostle giveth, *Blessed is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth*: that is, Blessed is he that hath not a condemning conscience, that alloweth not himself in any course wherein his conscience doth condemne him. So that if we have peace of conscience, and desire to maintein it, let us never allow our selves in any course that our conscience may condemne us in. That is the first answer.

Rom. 14. 22

Secondly, If we will maintein our peace, we must labour to have our hearts grounded in the assurance of the love of God: alas, it will fail us else, and leave us in trouble and perplexitie in time of greatest need. Observe how the Apostle joyneth love and

Answ. 2.

and peace together, 2. Cor. 13. 11. *The God of love and peace be with you.* If he be the God of love to us, it is sure enough he will be the God of peace also : If we know once that God loveth us, then we may set our hearts at rest : As long as we doubt of his love our conscience can never have true peace : And therefore if we would maintein true peace of conscience let us labour to be assured of Gods love.

Answ. 3. Thirdly, We must use the exercise of faith in applying the bloud of Christ; we must labour to purge and cleanse our consciences with it. If we find that we have sinned, we must runne presently to the bloud of Christ to wash away our sinne. We must not let the wound fester or exulcerate, but presently get it healed. As there is a fountain of sinne in us, so there is a fountain of mercie in Christ, *set open for Judah and Jerusalem,* and for every poore soul to wash in. As we sinne dayly, so he justifieth dayly, and we must dayly go to him for it : As every day we runne into new debts, so the Lords prayer teacheth us every day to beg forgivenesse : We must every day eye the brazen serpent. Justification is an ever running fountain, and therefore we cannot look to have all the water at once. A fountain ever runneth anew ; so justification ever floweth anew, and we must go to it. Christ is a *Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.* O let us sue out every day a dayly pardon of course ! Let us not sleep one night without a new pardon. Better sleep in a house full of adders and venemous beasts then sleep in one sinne. O then be sure with the day to clear the sinnes of the day : Then shall our conscience have true peace. But how if I have relapsed ? what shall I do then ? I answer, Every man that falleth doth not fall on all foure, as we use to say : he doth not fall quiet : There be degrees of falling. As in a sick man though he be ill yet he is not by and by dead ; some life remaineth still, which will look out towards health again : so there is so much life in justification as to recover thee again. Be constant therefore in this course : Ever go to Christ, ever wash in this fountain, ever bring thy soul hither to be cleansed ; and then thy conscience ever shall have peace.

Zech. 13. 1.

Object.

Sol.

Fourthly,

Answ. 4. Fourthly, If we would maintein our peace, then let us labour to be constant in obedience to Jesus Christ. *Whosoever keepeth his word, in him verily is the word of God perfected; and hereby know we that we are in him,* 1. John 2. 5. Mark; Hereby our conscience may tell us that we are right, and speak peace to us, if we *keep his word.*

II. Question; *How the peace of conscience doth depend upon our care and our obedience.*

The reason why I raise this question is this, Because as our justification is onely in Christ, so our peace is onely in him; how then doth the peace of our conscience depend on obedience? The place of Scripture that occasioneth the doubt is, 1. Pet. 3. 21. *The answer of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* It is by Christ; how dependeth it then on our obedience?

Answ. 1. A good conscience doth not depend upon our obedience as the principall cause of it, but upon justification which we have by Christ if we be in him: Rom. 5. 1. *Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Ye see then that our peace is grounded upon our justification as the principall cause of it. If we should seek for peace from our works and obedience, alas, they are sinfull and defective; there is no peace to be found in them; Our conscience would be troubled at our best duties, at our weaknesse in prayer, our frailties in hearing, our slips in every holy service; There is nothing we do but our conscience might find fault with it, and pick a hole in it; and therefore we had need to flie unto Christ for true peace. No wonder then that Papists have not true peace, but professedly say, that every man must doubt, and no man can be sure of his salvation. They must needs doubt indeed who trust to their own works: which can never bring true peace. The conscience must ever be quarrelling and finding of fault, and be without peace if we trust to the best works. So that this is the first answer, All true peace dependeth upon justification by faith in Christ as the principall cause.

Secondly, We answer, That our peace dependeth upon our obedience

obedience in this ſort, that we can have no peace except we be given to obedience. Thoſe men that can ſinne and yet be at peace, were never juſtified in their lives. A child of God when he ſinneth; as for example, if he ſhould be tempted to lie, or to omit a good dutie, which he knoweth he is bound to perform; yet this would much trouble his conſcience; his ſoul would be aſhamed, his heart perplexed, he would not know how to look the Lord in the face; *I have ſinned: what ſhall I do unto thee, O thou preſerver of men?* When David had ſinned againſt God, *I am troubled*, ſaith he; *and I go mourning all the day long.* And therefore peace of conſcience doth depend thus farre on obedience, as that a man cannot have peace unleſſe he be obedient, and take heed of ſinne, and labour in all things to be upright before God. Now if you ask me, But how doth our Peace depend upon our obedience? I anſwer, It dependeth upon obedience as the removing cauſe: It removeth that which would hinder our peace. Sinne would interrupt our peace: now obedience removeth ſinne. To this purpoſe the Apoſtle ſpeaketh 1. John 3. 18, 19. *My little children, let us not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth: For hereby we know that we are of the truth, and ſhall aſſure our hearts before God:* Hereby we ſhall aſſure our conſciences that we are in him, if we take heed of hypocriſie: If we love in truth, and be obedient in truth, we ſhall thereby remove all our doubts and our fears, our troubles and perplexities of conſcience. So that peace doth depend on obedience as the removing cauſe: It removeth that which otherwiſe would hinder peace. This is the firſt. Again, our peace of conſcience dependeth upon our obedience as the witneſſing cauſe of it. Obedience is one of the witneſſes of true peace; it witneſſeth that we have peace with God. *This is our rejoycing, even the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicitie and godly ſinceritie we have had our converſation in the world.* See here, it is the witneſſing cauſe of it: Paul had peace of conſcience; his conſcience was able to make him rejoyce: How? Becauſe it gave teſtimony that his converſation was godly and ſimple and gracious. Though we

Pſal. 38. 6.

Dub.
Sol.

2 *Cor.* 1. 12

be in Chriſt, yet we can have no peace unleſſe holy obedience doth witneſſe the ſame. Obedience is not the cauſe of the peace of our perceiving the ſame: We know we have peace by reaſon of our obedience: We know that *every one that doeth righteouſneſſe is born of God: We know we are paſſed from death to life, becauſe we love the brethren: Hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us, by the ſpirit that he hath given us.* Mark; we come to know it by obedience and by the fruits of obedience. Take away obedience, we can never know peace. *They that walk by this rule, peace ſhall be upon them and upon the Iſrael of God*, ſaith the Apoſtle. Thirdly, our peace of conſcience dependeth on our obedience as the confirming cauſe: Chriſt confirmeth our peace to us by making us walk cloſe to him and obedient unto him. Paul ſheweth how it preſerveth peace, as a ſhoe preſerveth the foot: ye know if we ſhould walk without ſhoes, barefoot, our feet would be in danger of pricking and hurting: So doth obedience to the Goſpel preſerve our peace: *Stand*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *having your feet ſhod with the preparation of the Goſpel of peace.* Mark; he compareth it to a ſhoe, which he would have us ſhod with; and then it will be the Goſpel of peace to us, and our peace ſhall be in ſafety.

1. *Iohn* 2. 29.
1. *Iohn* 4. 13.
1. *Iohn* 3. 14.
*Gal.*6.16.
*Epheſ.*6. 15.

Fourthly, our peace dependeth upon our obedience, not onely as a ſigne of true peace, nor onely as a guard to it, but as a thing pleaſing to God, without the which we diſpleaſe God. For though God be pleaſed with his children alwayes in Chriſt, yet he is not pleaſed that any in Chriſt ſhould be diſobedient to him. *Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to pleaſe God*, ſaith the Apoſtle. When Gods children walk in obedience: For otherwiſe conſcience will be troubled; *O, I do not pleaſe God; This is diſpleaſing unto God*; and, *This doth provoke God.* Not as though there were any ſuch perfection in our obedience that can ſatisfie any tittle of Gods law; but becauſe when our perſons are pleaſing to God in Jeſus Chriſt, then our obedience to God is pleaſing too in Jeſus Chriſt, and conſcience will ſay it.

1. *Theſſ.*4. 1.

Thus

Thus much shall suffice for answer to the second question.

III. Question; *What manner of obedience it is that peace of conscience dependeth upon?*

The reason of this question is this; Because it should seem there is no such obedience in this life as any peace of conscience should depend on. Doth not James say, *In many things we sinne all*? Doth not our Saviour say, *When ye have done all that ye can, say, We are unprofitable servants*? If our conscience can still say that we are unprofitable, and that we do sinne in every thing that we do, yea in many things, in all the duties we go about; if our consciences can say thus, How can any peace depend upon obedience? What obedience do you mean that peace of conscience dependeth upon?

I answer, 1. Absolute perfection in obedience is not required unto evangelicall peace. For if it were, no man could have peace; no not Paul, nor Abraham, nor any of the holiest of Gods children: and therefore absolute perfection is not required. *If we say we have not sinned we make Christ a liar, and his word is not in us*, 1. John 1. 10. Our conscience can still say we have sinned; and it can still say our obedience is imperfect: A halting leg can never go perfectly. A Jacob is called he that halteth; and every godly soul halteth; Though he do not halt between two, as wicked people do, yet he halteth in following after God. What purblind eye can see perfectly? or thick eare heare perfectly? He that hath these imperfections of body can neither go nor see nor heare perfectly; So the best of Gods children have imperfections of heart and spirit and mind: their faith is imperfect, their love is imperfect; and therefore their obedience must needs be imperfect. But absolute perfection is not required to true peace of conscience; and therefore this doth not hinder it. Second. Though absolute perfection be not required to peace, yet such obedience is required as may be acceptable to God. So saith the Apostle, *We labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him.* Such obedience we must shew as may be accepted of him, or we cannot 2. Cor. 5. 9.

have true peace. If our endeavours be not acceptable, our conscience will quickly heare of it, and tell us so: If we pray coldly, or heare unprofitably, or live loosely, if we do not do that which is acceptable to God, our consciences will soon complain. Nay though we do do the duties, if we do not do them in an acceptable manner, conscience will have matter against us still. 3. This acceptableness of obedience lieth in this, when our obedience is sincere, universall, and totall, and proceeding from the spirit of Christ Jesus dwelling in us. The Apostle giveth it this phrase, *When we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit*, Rom. 8. 4. That is our fulfilling the law, when Christ hath fulfilled the law for us, and maketh us sincerely to walk by it, not after the flesh but after the Spirit: when we do not favour our selves in one lust, nor suffer our selves in any beloved sinne; but whatever it be that is evil, our conscience can say we truly do hate it and labour to avoid it; whatever it be that is commanded us, be it never so contrary to our nature, yet our conscience can say we sincerely set our selves to do it. So walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit, this is sincerity of obedience, and this is required unto peace. 4. This sincerity of obedience maketh us to bewail our very infirmities, and be to be humbled for them: not onely to be humbled for greater sinnes, but also to be humbled for our infirmities. If we be not soundly humbled for our very infirmities also, they will hinder the peace of our conscience: We can have no peace except our conscience can witnesse that our infirmities do humble us and drive us to Christ and cause us to sue out a pardon. If conscience have not a pardon sealed for infirmities also, it will not be at peace. Christ bare our very infirmities: therefore we must be humbled for them, and go to him for pardon of them too, or conscience will not bee at peace. Thus I have answered also this third question.

IV. Question; *How if a man have a burdened and troubled Conscience, what must he do to be freed from it?*

The reason of this question is this; Because men are ignorant about

about it. When men are troubled in conſcience and burdened a little that way, preſently they daub all with peace, and go a wrong way to work. This courſe the Lord doth complaine of in the falſe Prophets who preached too much peace; *They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people ſlightly, ſaying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.* And ſo they do more hurt then good: Like a Chirurgion that skinneth the wound before he giveth ſearching ſalves to kill the matter of it: afterwards it breaketh out worſe, and it is a hundred to one but it will coſt the patient his life: So it is with many men: A man cannot rore a little for his ſinnes, *I have been a ſinner, and what ſhall I do? I have been a beaſt,* &c. But, *O,* ſay they, *believe man, Chriſt died for thee, and the promiſe is to thee, and God will pardon thee.* Thus they heal him ſlightly with *Peace, peace,* and it may be there is no peace to him yet; he had need to be ſearched more deeply: they skinne the wound, and it is a thouſand to one but it loſeth the mans ſoul, by giving a cordiall where a corroſive was neceſſarie. And therefore great reaſon that this queſtion ſhould be anſwered, If a man have a burdened troubled conſcience, what muſt ſuch a man do to be freed from it?

I anſwer, 1. Let him take heed that he meddle not too much with the ſecret will of God, what his decree and purpoſe is from eternity. As ſoon as an arrow is ſhot into the conſcience, and the conſcience cometh to be humbled, commonly the heart layeth about it, *And how if God have reprobated me? and what if he have appointed me to wrath? how then?* Beloved, ye muſt take heed of this: If your hearts faſten upon reprobation, that will marre all; that will quite diſcourage a poore ſoul from going to God.

2. Underſtand the word right. Do not think that becauſe God hath not in particular named thee, therefore he hath excluded thee. Gods promiſes are made in generall to all that believe: and they are to be applyed in particular to all them that believe: why then ſhouldſt thou exclude thy ſelf when God doth not exclude thee? Wouldſt thou have Chriſt? Chriſt

to justifie thee? Christ to sanctifie thee? Christ to rule thee? Wouldst thou be under Christs regiment, and live at his will? Come and welcome: no soul is excepted. *Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.* Ye see there is a *Quicunque vult*, Whosoever will. Indeed if thou hast not a will to be in Christ; but thou wilt do thus and thus, and thou wilt have thy will, and this lust, and that friend, and such a course, and, *Tush, this is too strict*; nay, if you be there thou art not for Christ: I have nothing for thee but hell and damnation. But if thou wouldst have Christ indeed, and be in Christ indeed, thy heart in Christ, thy will in Christ, thy whole self in Christ; then arise, he calleth thee. Thus understand the word right, the Gospel doth not exclude thee whosoever thou art.

Rev. 22. 17

3. Thou must not for fear of shame or losse, &c. keep from restitution wheresoever thou hast done wrong, or satisfaction wheresoever thou hast cozened, or reformation wheresoever thou art accustomed to any evil, or the doing any thing that may procure ease and quiet to thy conscience. It may be one is troubled in conscience for his wronging his neighbour in twentie pounds, and if he would make restitution he might have found peace: but he will not; no, he daubeth up his conscience some other way. Another it may be suffereth disorders in his familie and foul abuses, which if he would redresse he might have peace: but he will not. Another, if he would down with his pride; another, if he would be acquainted with Gods servants, or if he would take any pains in good duties be more diligent for the work of repentance, &c. but these things will not be done: Men plaister up their consciences (I know not how) some other way, and so go to hell for not taking the right way. But if any of you be troubled in conscience, keep back nothing, hold back nothing that may make for your true peace and quiet.

4. Thou must wait on God: Cast thy self at his feet, humbly desire him to give thee the true peace of conscience. But wait Gods leisure, knowing thou hast deserved to be utterly deprived

ved of it: and thus doing thou shalt find it to thy great comfort at last. *Blessed are all they that wait for him*; that is, when the Lord will be mercifull. He will do it with judgement; he will do it when it may do thee the most good, when it may bring himself most glorie: therefore it is fit thou shouldst wait for his time of comforting. Now because many do misconsture this waiting Gods leisure, (As for example, one is dead to all good duties, *O*, saith he, *I wait the Lords leisure till he quicken me*: *My heart is much hardned*, saith another; *but I wait the Lords leisure till he be pleased to soften it.* Thus men are lazie in the mean while; and yet they think they wait the Lords leisure. O beloved, this is not the waiting the Lord meaneth; this will not stay conscience; conscience is guiltie for all this waiting) therefore I beseech you consider what waiting I mean. 1. *Wait upon the Lord, and keep his way*; thou dost not wait else, unlesse thou keep praying, and striving, and meditating, and enquiring, and watching thine own heart lest it should slip aside. 2. Thou must wait as a servant waiteth upon his master: If his master calleth, he cometh; if he sendeth, he goeth: if he beckeneth, he taketh notice: So thou must wait. *As servants wait upon their masters, so our eyes wait upon the Lords till he have mercie upon us.* Be obedient in the mean time: go when he sendeth; come when he calleth; observe when he beckeneth; be diligent to be doing his pleasure. 3. Thou must wait onely upon God, not upon thy lusts too, and upon other things too; but thou must wait onely upon God: *My soul, wait thou onely upon God*, saith David, Psal. 62. 5. If thou wait upon any thing else, this is not to wait upon God. One waiteth a time to be revenged; another waiteth a time to satisfie this or that lust: this is not to wait upon God at all. 4. Take heed of healing thy self, and comforting thy self, or daubing up thy conscience thy self: If thou dost so, thou dost not wait upon God to do it: If thou dost it thy self, and snatchest at comfort thy self before he do give it, then thou dost not wait till he give it. Suppose a man hath done thee an injury; the Lord he will right thee if

Isai. 30. 18.

Psal. 123. 2.

if thou wilt wait: but if thou go and recompense evil for evil, and right thy self, thou dost not wait upon God as Solomon adviseth, *Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord and he will save thee.* Mark; thou must not save thy self, thine own credit, &c. by revenging, but wait on God for all. So here if conscience be troubled, thou must wait upon God to comfort it: If thou goest and daubest up the matter thy self, and crieſt, *Peace, peace,* to thy self, thou dost not wait upon God. Thus I have answered the last question, How if a man have a burdened and troubled conscience, what must such a man do to be freed from it? And hitherto we have spoken of the two last adjuncts of conscience, a Quiet conscience, and an Unquiet conscience; What they be, and, How they differ: and we have resolved and answered the questions and difficulties about them.

Prov. 20. 22.

Conscience beareth witnesse of our persons.

COncerning the witnesse of Conscience, I told you that conscience beareth witnesse of two things: 1. It beareth witnesse of our actions;

2. It beareth witnesse of our persons. The former hath been declared unto you at large: I come now to the latter; Conscience beareth witnesse also of our persons, whether we be good or evil, whether in Christ or in sinne: And here I will shew you foure things:

1. That every mans conscience may inform him what state he is in, whether of salvation or damnation, whether of grace or of nature.

2. How conscience doth it.

3. When conscience doth it.

4. How it cometh to passe then that so many thousands mistake and are ignorant and deluded about their estates.

1 Every mans conscience may informhim in what state he is.

1. For the first, That every mans conscience may inform him what estate he is in, whether good or bad; (I speak especially of such as live under the light of the Gospel of Christ.)

There

There are two rules: the one is Gods word, which pointeth out both estates; and the other is every mans conscience, which is privie to the frame and standing of every mans own heart, and which of these estates his estate is, conscience is privie to this. I will instance in some sorts of men. 1. The Jews, who contented themselves with formality: they sacrificed, they offered, they payd their tithes, they did that which Moses commanded them for the letter of it: now ye shall see their conscience could tell them that they were not perfect nor upright with God: All their duties, and formalities, and gifts, and sacrifices *could not make them that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience*, Heb. 9. 9. Mark; Their consciences could say they were not upright for all this. As they were not upright, so their conscience could tell them they were not upright. 2. Another instance we have in the Scribes and Pharisees: When they would have condemned the woman taken in adultery, their own conscience was privy that they were sinners themselves John 18. 9. So also it is with a child of God: His conscience is able to inform him that he is a child of God, and that he doth truly serve God, *I thank God*, saith Paul, *whom I serve with a pure conscience*. His conscience told him he was a true servant of God, and that he was Gods: *whose I am* saith he. So Davids conscience; *I am thine; save me: for I have sought thy Commandements*. So the Church; *My beloved is mine, and I am his*. Ye see then how conscience can inform and tell us what estate we are in, whether we be godly or carnall, whether our conversation be in heaven or on earth, whether we be in Christ or out of him. The spirit of man knoweth what is in him. It is easie to know what our great thoughts of heart are upon, what our greatest purposes and projects and studies be; whether about God or the world: the spirit of a man must needs know it. And therefore every man may draw out from conscience a true conclusion how it is with him. The reasons are these: 2. Tim. 1. 3.

1. The first is taken from the nature of conscience. The nature of conscience is such, that it must needs be able to know

what is with a man. Now his well-doings or his ill-doings are with him: he was with himself when he did them. When thou art proud, or impatient, or careleſſe in any duty, thou art with thy ſelf when thou art ſo: All thy ill-doings are with thee: therefore thy conſcience muſt needs know what thou art. Isa 59.12. *Our tranſgreſſions are with us; and as for our iniquities we know them.* Take a curſer; and, as Solomon ſaith, Eccleſ.7.22. *Thine own heart knoweth that thou haſt uſed to curſe others.* So it is with a godly ſoul: Thine obedience is with thee, and thy ſelf-deniall is with thee, and thy care to walk before God, all is with thee; and therefore thou muſt needs know it. This is the nature of conſcience; It is privy to what is with one.

2. The ſecond reaſon is taken from the equity of Gods judgements on the wicked. The Lord he will judge none to hell, but his conſcience ſhall confeſſe he was one that walked in the way to hell and death. Ye may reade it in the man that had not on the wedding-garment: When Chriſt did charge him with his not having on a wedding-garment, and did condemne him to utter darkneſſe, the text ſaith, *he was ſpeechleſſe*; that is, his Matth.22.12. conſcience confeſſed that Chriſts judgement was juſt: *I have not on a wedding-garment*, ſaith his conſcience; *and it is my fault that I have none; and I am rightly condemned.* Thus his conſcience did know it; otherwiſe he could not have been ſpeechleſſe in his own defence. As Feſtus told Agrippa that he Acts 25.16 anſwered the Prieſts, *It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to dye before that he who is accuſed have his accuſers face to face, and have licence to anſwer for himſelf concerning the crime laid againſt him*: So may I ſay, that the great Judge of quick and dead will not judge any man to hell but he will have his accuſers face to face, and if he can anſwer for himſelf he may. Now if conſcience be not privy to what eſtate ſoever a wicked man is in, his conſcience could never accuſe him face to face at the laſt day, nor juſtifie the Lord Jeſus, and make the ſinner ſtand ſpeechleſſe before God. He might anſwer, *Lord, I do not know any ſuch thing as is laid to my charge: I am not convinced that the caſe is thus and thus with*

with me, that I am in such an estate as I am accused of. No wicked man shall be able to say thus: Therefore conscience can inform a man in what estate he is.

3. The third reason is taken from the Lords manner of judging the godly. He will judge them and absolve them *secundum allegata & probata*, as we say, according to the word and their own consciences. Ye may see the true form of judgement which the Lord will go by, Matth. 25. Where the Lord convinceth the whole world who were righteous and who not, who to be judged to punishment, and who to life for ever; at last he concludeth, *The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternall.* As if he had said, *Your consciences can say ye are wicked: ye did not feed, nor clothe, nor visit me: Go your wayes to hell.* So for the righteous; *Your consciences can say ye are righteous: Go ye to heaven.* Thus the Lord will do. Now this could not be if conscience could not inform every one that is godly that he is so: If conscience could not witnesse what estate they are in, this could not be. Thus ye see the truth of the first thing.

II. The second that I promised to shew you is, How conscience doth this. Ye have heard that it is able to inform every one what estate he is in before God: Now it followeth to consider, How conscience doth it. This it doth by comparing the word of God with our hearts, and our hearts with the word: As for example; *They who have respect to all Gods commandments shall never be ashamed*, saith the word: *But* saith conscience, *I desire to know all my dutie to God and man, and to perform all that I know: and therefore I shall not be ashamed. To him that soweth righteousnesse shall be a sure reward*, saith the word: *But*, saith conscience, *I plough up my nature and all the fallow-ground of my heart, and I sow righteousnesse: and therefore to me shall be a sure reward.* So, *To be spiritually minded is life and peace*, saith the word; *But*, saith conscience, *I am spiritually minded; my mind is set upon things that are spirituall: therefore I have life and peace.* So conscience also judgeth of the state of sinne. *Those that live after the flesh*

2. How conscience doth this.

Psal. 119. 6.

Prov. 11. 18.

Rom. 8. 6.

shall dye, saith the word: *But*, saith conscience, *my life is led after the flesh and the lusts of it: therefore I shall dye.* Hee
Rom. 8. 13. *that believeth not is condemned already*, saith the word: *But*,
John 3. 18. saith Conscience, *I doe not believe: therefore I am in the state of condemnation.* The word saith, *A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit: But*, saith conscience, *my works and my courses are corrupt and naught: therefore so is my heart.* Thus ye see that conscience doth it by reasoning: And this conscience can very well do; 1. Because conscience hath a very good judgement. It is a very wise and judicious faculty in the soul of man. Some make it an act of judgement. We do not take it so: It is not an act of judgement, but it is a reflexive faculty of the soul having a very good judgement. *Whether it be right to obey you rather then God, judge ye*, saith Peter, Acts 4. 19. appealing to their owne consciences to judge in the point. So that conscience is a faculty of a good judgement. Now if it be judicious, it must needs be able to reason and to argue about our estates, and find out whether they be good or no. It is the judgement of man that is able to argue, and able to hold an argument: *We thus judge*, saith the Apostle, *that if one died for all, then are all dead*, 2. Cor. 5. 14. Mark; His proposition he would prove was, *That all the believers in Christ are dead to themselves and alive unto God.* Now ye may see how his judgement maketh here an argument; *If Christ died for them all, then they are all dead: but Christ died for them all: therefore they are all dead.* Judgement is able to make arguments: and therefore if conscience be a reflexive faculty that hath a very good judgement, it must needs be able to frame arguments, and so make out what our estates are. 2. Because there is naturall logick in every mans conscience: It can frame syllogismes, thus, *As many as be led by the spirit of God, are the sonnes of God*, saith the word: *But*, saith a godly mans conscience, *I am led by Gods spirit, and I am carefull to follow the leading of Gods holy spirit: therefore I am one of Gods sonnes.* And so on the other side. Ye will say, How can a countrey-mans conscience make syllogismes? It is

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onely for scholars and such as have studied logick in the schools to make syllogisms. I answer, It is true; Artificiall logick is onely among scholars: But there is naturall logick in conscience, which doth not stand upon forms. The godly people at Rome were never brought up at Universitie: yet the Apostle telleth them they had logick enough to argue themselves to be dead unto sinne and alive unto God through Christ; *Likewise also*, saith he, *reckon ye your selves to be dead indeed unto sinne, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* The originall is, λογίζεσθε, *Exercise so much logick in your selves*; *Like good logicians prove your selves to be dead unto sinne and alive to God.* So that ye see there is naturall logick in conscience: and therefore conscience is able to frame arguments about our estate, and to inform us what it is. Rom. 6. 11.

III. The third thing I propounded to consider is, When conscience doth this. This is a very necessarie point: and indeed so they are all; but this more especially. I have shewed that conscience is able to inform us what estate we are in, whether of grace or nature: but when doth it perform this? I answer, I need not so much speak of the godly, because they do mark conscience. But let me speak of such as are foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts, who never had yet the washing of regeneration nor the renewing of the holy Ghost: I answer about them; 1. Their conscience must needs have a time when to do it. *I do remember my faults this day*, saith Pharaohs butler, Gen. 41. 9. His conscience did inform him; and there was a time when his conscience did inform him. 2. Conscience would choose a time by it self: it would inform a wicked man solemnly and punctually of his rotten and cursed estate he is in. I say, it would have a solemn time by it self for this, if it could have it: but a wicked man taketh an order with his conscience that it shall not tell him solemnly how it is with him; neither will he find a time to suffer it: As it was with Felix; When his conscience began to grumble against him, when Paul had told him of righteousnesse and of judgement, he trembled, his conscience began to stirre, and would then

3. When conscience doth this.

have solemnly dealt with him indeed: but he shuffled it off, and would not find time; *Go thy way at this time*, saith he to Paul; *I will heare thee at a more convenient time.* And so he said to his conscience too. Conscience would take a solemn and set time to inform men what their estates are; but men will not suffer them: and therefore conscience is fain to take such sudden times as it can get. Ye will ask, What times be they?

Acts 24. 25.

Conscience interlineth.

I answer. First, when conscience interlineth. As for example, in the hearing of the word: While men are hearing the word, it may be the Preacher preacheth of holinesse, and a wicked man heareth it; *But I have it not*, saith his conscience. Mark; his conscience interlineth. It may be the preacher is preaching how desperately careless men are of their souls how they look to every thing more then to them; conscience interlineth, *This is my case.* It may be he is preaching against Adulterie; *This sinne I have committed*, saith a guiltie conscience: or against rushing upon Gods ordinances without preparation; *This is my constant course*, saith an evill mans conscience. It may b the preacher is preaching of conversion and becoming a new creature in Christ; *This I am yet to seek in*, saith conscience. Thus conscience interlineth: Though the man heareth on, and it may be taketh little to heart, yet conscience interlineth a sudden information of his wretched estate. Like a bird that flieth by, or like a swift-shot arrow, that is presently out of sight, so it may be a man taketh very little notice of it. Like the forenamed Felix; as Paul was preaching of righteousnesse and tempereance, *I have it not*, saith his conscience; and of judgement to come, *What shall I do then?* saith his conscience. Thus conscience interlined, and made him tremble on a sudden, like a sudden shivering of a cold, or a sudden startle of a man affrighted, and away it was gone quickly. I beseech you observe your own bosomes. Do ye not feel this now and then at a sermon, when ye heare it? do not your consciences interline our sermons, and put in parentheses now and then? When ye heare such and such a sin reproved, condemned, *And this is my sin*, saith conscience: when ye heare these and these graces commened,

Acts 24. 25

And

And I never had these, saith conscience: When ye hear these and of a carnall estate, *And these or some of these are in me*, saith these marks conscience? do not your consciences interline in this manner? As Paul was speaking to the shipmen concerning God, his conscience did sweetly interline thus, *There stood by me this night an Angel of God, whose I am*, saith his conscience. And as he was writing to the Romans, *God is my witnesse*, saith he, *whom I serve in my spirit*. But do not your consciences interline otherwise with you? If they do, I beseech you considerit: Your consciences do then truly inform you of your rotten estates: listen to them.

Acts 27. 23

Rom. 1. 9.

Secondly, when conscience falleth a choking. As for example, in prayer: a wicked man prayeth; *But I do not pray right*, saith his conscience. *I humbly beseech thee, O Lord: Nay, but I do not beseech humbly*, saith his conscience. *I desire to be sanctified and purged from my sins: Nay, but I do not hunger after any such thing*, saith conscience. *I do not confesse my sinnes right, nor beg for grace right*. Do your consciences choke you thus? Now your consciences inform you of your estates. Peradventure ye hardly perceive this choking at all: It is done in a moment, and it presently ceaseth, because ye are not willing to heare it: and therefore it may be conscience doth it by sudden flashes. It is said the Lord *spake suddenly* to Moses: so often conscience speaketh suddenly to men, a word and away. As David saith of the wicked, *God shall shoot an arrow at them, and they shall be wounded on a sudden*: So conscience shooteth a quick arrow, and it woundeth men in the twinkling of an eye, and it is gone. *Lord, have mercy upon us*, said one: *But I should not say so vainly and in ordinary talk*, saith conscience. *I do not hate this man for his holinesse and strictnesse: But you do*, saith conscience. And so when men are defending evil by arguments; *But this is false*, saith conscience. Thus conscience choketh on a sudden, and is gone. I confesse generally the men of the world mark not these things: They are such sudden sparklings of conscience that men for the most part do not heed them: But these are Gods witnesses; and men shall know

Conscience choketh.

Num. 12. 4

one

one day they were truly informed of their estates by these instantaneous *Items* of conscience.

Thirdly, when conscience shooteth like a stitch in a mans side. As for example; Sometimes when men are about their callings and their worldly businesse, then cometh conscience like a sudden stitch in ones side and give them a twitch, *O how worldly am I!* saith conscience: *Shall I never get this worldly mindednes cured?* Many times conscience speaketh while men are working, or playing, or eating, or buying, or selling.

Fourthly, so likewise when conscience commenteth upon the judgements of God. Let an Adulterer fall sick; *Yea, this is for mine adulterie*, saith his conscience. Let a company-keeper be in want of outward things; *Yea, this is my drunkennesse*, saith conscience: *This is my wickednesse my way, my doings which have procured me these things; this ague, this proverty, this shame, this discomfort.* Thus I have shewed you how conscience doth inform the wicked of their wretched estate; and when it doth it. It remaineth now that I speak something of the fourth point.

Jr. 4. 18

4. why many are deluded about their estate.

IV. How cometh it to passe then that so many thousands mistake, and are ignorant and deluded about their estates? The reason of this doubt is this; Seeing conscience is able to inform every one what his estate is, whether it be blessed or cursed; and seeing also that conscience doth it; and doth it by argument; and hath its time when it doth it: a man now would wonder that any should be ignorant of his estate when his own conscience doth tell him how it is with him. For answer I will explain unto you two things: 1. The reasons why men are mistaken; 2. The reasons why they are mistaken though conscience inform them.

First, They build upon false grounds which are not in Gods word. Some are so foolish that they build upon outward things, as health, peace, prosperitie, successe, and the like. They prosper, and all things go well with them & therefore sure God is at peace with them: This is not so; but they think so though some again build upon grounds which men of corrupt minds

do

do give them, or which they take from the common opinion of moſt, thinking that to be faith and repentance which the moſt take ſo to be, or which a teacher fit for their palate taketh ſo to be. On the contrarie ſide, weak Chriſtians oftentimes miſtake themſelves by judging their eſtates to be bad, becauſe God letteth them be poore and mean and comfortleſſe in the world: Therefore they conclude God is angrie with them, or that they are not that which they ſeem to themſelves to be, becauſe they are ſo croſſed in all outward things. This is the firſt reaſon of errour in this kind.

2. A ſecond reaſon is the not-right underſtanding of Gods word: As when men judge of themſelves by ſuch places of Scripture as were not intended to be rules and to be of uſe to ſuch ends as they apply them: as *Whoſoever calleth upon the Lord ſhall be ſaved*, Rom. 10. 13. Hence the wicked may falſely conclude, *I call upon the Lord, and I pray unto him; therefore I ſhall be ſaved.* And ſo on the contrarie, a weak Chriſtian who findeth not in himſelf thoſe degrees of grace which ſome places of Scripture ſeem to require concludeth from thence againſt himſelf, *Therefore I have no grace at all.* This is a ſecond cauſe of miſtaking. *Reaſ.* 2.

3. A third cauſe is the not trying and examining our own hearts. Some are loth to trouble themſelves about it: They are loth to think ſo bad of themſelves as that they are in ſuch a courſe as wherein God will not love them. Nay, they cannot endure that others ſhould diſcover their hearts unto them: They had as lieve they ſhould ſhew them the pit of hell as ſhew them themſelves. They look to ſome common gifts and graces that are in them, ſuch gifts and graces may be in a reprobate, but they will not think ſo; as illumination, knowledge, the gift of prayer, of temperance, &c. Theſe they look to, and theſe they ſpeak of, though they have reigning luſts within in their hearts: As Jehu; *Come, ſee my zeal*, ſaith he, 2. Kings 10. 16. He doth not ſay, *Come, ſee my pride and hypocriſie*: but, *my zeal.* Jehu looked at his zeal, and ſo thought he was right. So on the contrarie, weak Chriſtians may ſometimes look onely at *Reaſ.* 3.

their sinnes and infirmities, and take no notice of Gods graces that are in them, and so may mistake their own selves, and conclude amisse of their estates. Thus I have shewed you the reasons why men are mistaken about their estates. Now I will shew you the reasons why men are mistaken though conscience do tell them,

1. Because the speeches of conscience in the wicked many times, yea most times, are low speeches. The gnawings of conscience whereby they are told they are in a bad and a damned estate are like the gnawings of a very little worm that a man can hardly feel. *Where their worm dieth not* : The word in the originall, signifieth a very little worm that breedeth in scarlet, that a man can very hardly see or perceive : so men sometimes do hardly see or perceive the condemning and gnawing of conscience. Again, conscience biteth suddenly, as I told you ; it giveth a little nip, and away : Like a sparrow that flieth by ; it flieth so fast by a mans eye that he can scarce tell whether it be a sparrow or no : So it is not easily perceived whether it be a condemning conscience or no : it giveth such sudden nips, and away, that men seldome take notice. Beloved, there is never a wicked man under heaven ; unlesse he be delivered up absolutely to a reprobate sense, but hath a thousand of these sudden momentany nips every day in the yeare. Had he the heart to observe them (but he hath not) he might see his wretched estate, to trouble him, and provoke him to Christ, and to be converted that God might heal him : I say, had he a heart he might see it : but these nips are so secret and sudden that he doth not. So likewise it is with the godly in regard of true comfort : Their conscience suddenly flasheth in comfort, and they many times do not observe it. As Job speaketh of God, *Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not : he passeth on also and I perceive him not* : So doth the Lord go by his children in the sudden flashes of comfort in their conscience, but many times they see him not, perceive him not.

Isa.66.24

Iob 9.11.

2. Because the devil blindeth mens eyes therefore they do not see what their consciences do shew them. Ye may reade this

this of the wicked people in Corinth : St Paul saith he *commended himself and the Gospel to every mans conscience in the sight of God*; that is, He did so preach, and so live, that every mans conscience could not choose but say, *Certainly Paul preacheth the truth, and Paul liveth right, and we must live as he speaketh and doeth.* He made their consciences say thus, and to tell them they were not right if they did not. But mark what followeth : Some did not see this : Why? *The god of this world*, saith he, *hath blinded their eyes.* So the god of this world blindeth the eyes of the wicked, that what their consciences shew them they do not see it nor observe it. So for Gods people ; Though they be in a good and a blessed estate, and their consciences can say it, yet Satan oftentimes hindereth them that they do not perceive their own comfort. 2. Cor. 4, 2

3. Men do not love conscience. We should love conscience better then the dearest friend we have under heaven. We would do much for a friends sake : but we should do a thousand times more for conscience sake : Obey Magistrates for conscience sake ; suffer disgrace, reproches, any thing, for conscience sake. It is better then all the friends in the world. But the wicked, they do not love conscience : let conscience speak, they care not to heare. They will heare friends, but they will not heare conscience. Let their lusts call, and their profits and pleasures call for this and that thing, they heare all : but they love not to heare conscience. Nay, many wicked men are angry to heare talk of it. When Paul had made mention of conscience Ananias commanded he should be smitten : *Men and brethren*, saith Paul, *I have lived in all good conscience before God untill this day. Smite him on the mouth*, saith the high Priest Ananias. He was angry to heare him talk of a good conscience. This is most certain ; men do not love conscience, nor to be curbed by conscience, nor informed by conscience : They had as lieve see the devil as that their consciences should inform them of their estates, and tell them thus and thus they are. They are told rightly, and yet they are mistaken, because they do not love to heare conscience of that theme Rom. 13. 5 Act. 23. 1

Of a good and bad Conscience.

YE have heard concerning the witnesse-bearing of conscience about our estates. The next thing to be spoken of is that wel-known distinction of a Good and a Bad conscience. This distinction we reade of in Scripture: Concerning a good conscience, see Heb. 13. 18. *We trust we have a good conscience.* Concerning a bad conscience see Heb. 10. 22. *Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.* There be both the members of the distinction. Of them both briefly and in order; and first of a good conscience.

Concerning a good conscience

The goodnesse of conscience is two-fold; naturall, and renewed. 1. The naturall goodnesse of conscience consisteth in those reliques of goodnesse which it retaineth since the creation. Ye know man depraved and corrupted his conscience by his fall: yet there be some reliques left, as reason, and knowledge, and reflexion. I do not mean reliques of any spirituall goodnesse in conscience: For as there is no spirituall goodnesse left in the other facultics of the soul, so neither in conscience. But the naturall goodnesse which I mean is nothiag else but the veracity of conscience, whereby it is inforced according to the knowledge it hath to tell the truth. Thus every wicked man hath a good conscience: Their conscience is good in that sense; their conscience hath this naturall goodnesse, that it telleth them the truth how it is with them. Nay, it is essentiall to conscience to be good in this sense. It is the essentiall property of conscience to speak according to its knowledge. It is the best faculty a wicked man hath: it is better then his mind, or heart, or will. There is more goodnesse in a wicked mans conscience then in any other of the powers of his soul: His conscience speaketh more for God then himself doth, and standeth more for God then himself will. Not but that as all the powers of the soul are desperately corrupted by sinne so conscience is desperately corrupted as well as any of them: but I speak of the essentiall goodnesse of it, which can never be lost.

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The devils in hell have not loſt the goodneſſe of their eſſence: Nay, the eſſence is better then the eſſence of Gods Saints: their eſſence muſt be good, becauſe that is Gods creature; nay, better then any mans eſſence, becauſe the Lord made them a degree above man. And as man is a degree above beaſts, ſo Angels are a degree above man: ſo conſcience is a degree above other powers of the ſoul in its naturall goodneſſe. That conſcience hath ſuch a naturall goodneſſe in it, ſee it in thoſe curſed Scribes and Phariſees, hypocrites, who brought the woman taken in adultery to Chriſt: Their conſcience was good; *they were convicted of their conſciences*: their conſciences dealt honeſtly with them, and told them the truth that they were wicked ſinners themſelves. This is the naturall goodneſſe in conſcience. *John* 8.9.

2. A renewed good conſcience. I call it a renewed good conſcience, becauſe when a man is renewed, all the man is renewed; all his mind and the ſpirit of it is renewed, Epheſ. 4.23. *That ye may be renewed in the ſpirit of your mind.* If the man be renewed, all the mind muſt be renewed; and therefore the conſcience muſt bee renewed too, for the mind and the conſcience ever go together: nay, conſcience is mainly ſeated in the mind; and therefore if the mind be renewed, ſo is the conſcience; and if the mind be defiled, ſo is the conſcience. *To them that are defiled is nothing pure, but their minds and conſciences are defiled.* Mark; When they are defiled they are defiled together: ſo when they are waſhed and renewed, they are waſhed and renewed together. Now this renewed conſcience is either perfect or defective. 1. Perfect. I mean not perfect in every degree of goodneſſe: For ſo no mans conſcience in the world is perfect: But I mean perfect in every part and condition of goodneſſe. 2. A defective good renewed conſcience is that which faileth in ſome conditions of goodneſſe. We call it a *weak* conſcience, which is apt to be polluted and defiled again. 1. Cor. 8.7. *Their conſcience being weak is defiled.* This is a defective good conſcience renewed, but imperfectly renewed. *Tit.* 1.15.

A firme conscience

I. To a good conscience that is soundly renewed five things are necessary.

1. Knowledge of Gods will, and that which doth follow the true knowledge of his will, namely true humiliation and fear. By nature the conscience is blind and sturdy and venturous; and therefore it is necessary that it should be illightened to understand the will of God and to presse it: and again it is necessary that the heart should be humbled, or else it will not stoop to Gods will: and it is necessary also that this holy fear should fall upon the heart, that it may not dare to transgresse. St. Peter being to speak of a good conscience, premiseth all these as necessarie thereunto: First he adviseth that Christians have *knowledge* to be able *to give a reason of the hope that is in them*; and then that they should have *meekness* and *fear*, for to do it: *with meekness and fear*, saith he, *having a good conscience*. Mark; Knowledge and meekness and fear are required to make a good conscience; without them the conscience cannot be good. By nature we are all blind, and stubborn, and fearless of sinning: and therefore till we be cured of these evils, our consciences cannot be good.

1 *Pet.* 3. 15, 16

2. The second thing is a watchfulness and warfare against sinne: This is required too to a renewed good conscience. By nature we are drowsie, and careless, and secure, and do not stand upon our guard to wage warre against our lusts and the desires of our flesh; and so long our consciences can never be good: and therefore this spirituall watchfulness and maintaining warre against sinne is required to the having a good conscience: *That thou maist warre a good warrefare*, saith Paul to Timothie, *having faith and a good conscience*, 1. Tim. 1. 18, 19. Some who seemed to have a good conscience, because they did not maintain this holy warfare against sinne and the flesh, they have lost it: Therefore this is another requisite required to a good conscience.

3. The third is tenderness of conscience. By nature our hearts are sealed, and dead, and unclean: and therefore we must get us tender and pure hearts if we would have good

renewed

renewed conſciences. *The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart and good conſcience and faith unfeigned*, 1. Tim. 1. 5. See how the Apoſtle compoundeth them together, *a pure heart and a good conſcience*. We muſt get our hearts purged and quickened, that they may be ſenſible of the leaſt evill; and then our conſciences will be good and be as a bridle to hold us from evill. A hard heart and a good conſcience can never ſtand together.

4. The fourth is the cleanneſſe of conſcience by the waſhing of Chriſts bloud. This is the main and the principall of all: Yea indeed the bloud of Chriſt is the ſole and onely cauſe of a good conſcience. I would not be miſtaken: I named indeed other cauſes; Knowledge and Humbling, and a holy Fear, a combat againſt ſinne, and Tenderneſſe: but I do not mean as though a good conſcience were partly beholding to them and partly to Chriſts bloud: For it is wholly and onely beholding to Chriſts bloud for its goodneſſe; his bloud is the onely price of it: But my meaning is this, That though Chriſts bloud be the one only cauſe of redemption, yet in the application of redemption the Lord uſeth all thoſe forenamed graces while he applieth it to the conſcience. Therefore this now I adde; The waſhing of Chriſts bloud, this is chiefly required to the goodneſſe of conſcience. We have two places of Scripture to prove it: The one, Heb. 9. 14. *How much more ſhall the bloud of Chriſt purge your conſciences from dead works?* It is that onely can do it. The other text is 1. Pet. 3. 11. *The anſwer of a good conſcience towards God by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt.* Where the Apoſtle firſt giveth this title to a renewed conſcience, to be called *a good conſcience*: Secondly, he nameth the cauſe that maketh it to be good, the power of *Chriſts reſurrection*: When the reſurrection of Chriſt Jeſus is powerfull upon us, then conſcience becometh good.

5. The fifth is quietneſſe. By nature nothing is ſo fierce and violent, if it be once awaked, as conſcience is: O it is unſpeakably furious. Thus is conſcience by nature: and therefore it can never be good untill we get it appeaſed with the

aſſurance

assurance of the pardon of our sinnes, and so true peace and comfort established in it. This is the reason why the Scripture joyneth a good conscience and faith so often together: as 1. Tim. 3. 9. *Holding the mysterie of faith in a pure conscience.* It cannot be a pure or good conscience if faith be not held in it. As long as the conscience is not underpropped by faith, the conscience must needs be in a wilderneſſe: *Perhaps my sinnes are imputed unto me; perhaps they are pardoned: Perhaps they are covered, perhaps not.* As long as the conscience lieth under these uncertainties, it cannot be firm and soundly good indeed: therefore we must labour for assurance of pardon by faith. Thus much of a good renewed conscience that is perfectly and soundly renewed.

An infirm conscience

II. Secondly, There is a good conscience renewed but not soundly renewed, very much as yet defective and imperfect. The former conscience is called *conscientia firma*, a firm conscience: This is called *conscientia infirma*, an infirm conscience. Rom. 15. 1. *We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.* This infirm conscience is a good conscience too, and renewed, but cumbred with sundry imperfections; which in processe of time by groweth in grace are for the most part, conquered in the godly. True faith is required unto this: For the Apostle calleth such an one *a brother in Christ*, one that hath this infirm conscience: *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth.* And we must not set such an one at nought, *Tush what care I for him? I know I may lawfully do thus: and this is my Christian liberty; and shall I lose it for him, because of his conscience?* Nay saith the Apostle, *Why dost thou set at nought thy brother?* Mark; The Apostle counteth such an one a Christian brother, and not to be set at nought: and therefore this is a good conscience too, differing as much as white from black from such consciences as are weak through superstition of mind and through pride of heart, because they will not be otherwise, or through affected ignorance because they love not to be better informed. These weak consciences are wicked; I speak not of these: I

Rom. 14. 21.

Rom. 14. 10.

speak

speak of a good Conscience, a conscience renewed, but renewed imperfectly, having yet sundry defects and imperfections. The imperfections of it are,

1. Imperfection of knowledge. It doth not yet soundly and clearly understand what is lawfull and what is pure, and what is by Christian liberty indifferent. Paul saith, *I know and am perswaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of it self: but to him that esteemeth any thing to bee uncleane, to him it is uncleane.* He speaketh of things that are indifferent: The Apostle had knowledge: but there were others who did not know this; *O I may not eat this meat; I may not play at Bowles, or use any other recreation: I should sinne if I should, &c.* This is one weaknesse in this kind of conscience, weaknesse of knowledge. Rom. 14. 14.

2. The second imperfection is to be grieved where it needeth not bee grieved: As when it seeth other doe that which it self through mistake doth judge to be evil, it is apt to be grieved and troubled to see it; *If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.* It may be thou thinkest it lawfull to eat such meat; but he thinketh otherwise, and so is grieved to see thee eat. This is another imperfection in this conscience, to be grieved and offended without just cause. Rom. 14. 15.

3. A third imperfection is in judgement: It is apt to judge and condemne another mans liberty 1 Cor. 10. 29. *Why is my liberty judged of anothers mans conscience?* He speaketh of a weake conscience. *It is apt to be judging and condemning my liberty* saith he; *but why so?* This is a fault and an imperfection indeed; *O such an one sinneth, he doeth so and so:* yet it may be the thing is not unlawfull but a weak conscience is apt so to judge it and to condemne him that doeth it. *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not: And let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth* Rom. 14. 3.

4. A fourth imperfection is this: A weak conscience is apt to be misled. So the Apostle intimateth; *Take heed lest by any meanes this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block unto them that are weake: for if any man see thee who hast knowledge sit*

at meat in the Idols temple, shall not the Conscience of him that is weake be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to Idols ? And through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish for whom Christ died ? Where ye see that weak consciences are apt to be misled. The reason is this. Because when they see others whom they know to be more learned and judicious then themselves to do so and so, that may soon tempt them to do it though their conscience be against it.

1. Cor. 8. 9, 10. 11,

Vse 1. The first use is this; If any have weak consciences let them labour to strengthen them. Ye see what imperfections are in a weak conscience; how apt it is to be offended and to judge other mens liberty, how prone to misleading: therefore let every good soul labour to be strengthened.

2. The second use is this; Those that be strong must be carefull that they offend not the weak. Though they do believe such and such Christian liberties they have, yet if they know the use of them will offend their weak brother, they should be carefull to abstein, *Let no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brothers way.*

Rom. 14. 13

3. Thirdly, if it be such a sinne to sinne against the conscience of the weak then what a sinne is it to sinne against the conscience of all that are godly, whether weak ones or strong ones? Ye who walk after the flesh, and can have disorders in your families, and vanity in your mouths, and apparent corruptions in your lives; Ye who can drink and be drunken and keep company and profane the Lords dayes; ye offend the consciences of all that are godly: it is a grief to their souls to see it. Let me tell you; It is a sinne to be wicked however, and the high-way to hell: but to be wicked when ye have godly neighbours about you, your sinne now is double: For as you offend God, so you offend them too. Ye may remember what Christ saith, *Whosoever offendeth one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a milstone were hung about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea*, Matth. 18. 6. Ah ye vile wretches! ye little imagine what fearefull vengeance ye pull on

on your own heads : It were better for you that a milſtone were hung about your necks, and ye thrown into the ſea, then that ye ſhould offend one of theſe little ones. Ye may call them what ye will ; call them *Puritanes, preciſians, uncharitable people, cenſurers* : ye may call them as Satan teacheth you to call them : but it is certain, it were better a milſtone were hung about your neck, and ye thrown into the ſea, then that ye ſhould offend any one of Chriſts little ones : The Lord open your eyes that ye may repent and believe the Goſpel your ſelves and be ſaved.

4. Laſtly, be exhorted, brethren, to labour after a good conſcience. How excellent a thing is it that hath ſo many good ingredients! Illumination is one ingredient, and Faith is another, and Tenderneſſe another, and Pureneſſe another, and Quietneſſe another, and the Bloud of Jeſus Chriſt another. It is like Aarons compoſition, which ſmelt ſweetly when he went into the Sanctuarie : It is compounded of excellent conditions, ſuch as ſmell ſweet when we come before God : the Lord loveth that ſuch ſhould come near him. We may come with aſſurance to ſpeed if we come with a good conſcience ; *Let us draw near with aſſurance of faith, having our hearts ſprinkled from an evil conſcience.* Mark ; we may draw near with aſſurance if we come with a good conſcience. It will comfort us in all troubles, and ſupport us in all dangers : It maketh us happie : nay, there is no happines without it. It will make us with quietneſſe and contentedneſſe of ſpirit undergo whatever it ſhall pleaſe God to lay upon us. How can they want comfort that have this? It is a ſpring of comfort within them. This will remain with us when all other comforts will forſake us : When friends fail, and eſtate faileth, when credit and health and ſtrength and all fail, then a good conſcience, if we have it, will ſpeak peace to us, yea and it will effect it in us, comfort us, and faſten comfort upon us. Friends may ſpeak words of comfort and peace to us; but it may be we are not able to receive it : the Miniſter may preach peace ; but it may be we are not able to take it : But a good

Heb. 10. 22

conscience speaketh peace and effecteth it; it doth not onely speak it but it putteth it into our hearts. It proppeth us up in all miseries, in sicknesses, yea in death it self. A good conscience then maketh us hold up our heads when all the world shall be confounded: A good conscience will bear us out against the King of terrours: It is onely a good conscience that can look death in the face, and say, *O death, where is thy sting? thanks be to God who giveth us victorie through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Yea, at the day of judgement, when the whole world shall be burning before us, when the great men of the world who go in silks and scarlet and broidered hair shall fear and shiver as a reed shaken with the wind, this will make us with boldnesse undergo the terrour of it. This will make us happie in all our distresses: When crosses pelt us, and sickneſſe paineth us, and death attatcheth us, we are happie men. What if we have the tokens of Gods wrath upon our bodies so we have the marks of his love upon our souls? What outward calamitie soever happeneth to us, yet if we have this good conscience we are happie. O then let us labour to get it by faith and a holy life. If we would be safe in the floud-time, in the day of Gods wrath, we must be busie now about the ark, we must provide before-hand for it: Nothing but this ark will save us in the deluge of Gods anger. It is in vain to trouble our selves about other things: Jubal was a merrie man; he made pipes and organes: Jabal built tents; others planted vineyards: but Noah provided his ark. Many desire comfort in sickneſſe, in death; but they do not provide for it before-hand: They look after their sports or businesses in the world; but this ark is neglected, this good conscience, without which all mens labour is vain. Be they what they will be, in never so much credit and esteem, they are yet most miserable when troubles and afflictions come on them, as one day they shall and shall not tarrie; then all their comforts will forsake them: When death looketh them in the face: then their hearts die within them. How full of pride and haughtinesse soever they were before, yet when they come to die, if their consciences be awaked they

1. *Cor.* 15. 55. 57.

Gen 4. 20.

they will with Saul fall down to heare the name of death, and no spirits be left in them. Nay, if we want a good conscience when we lie on our death-beds, and desire good people to pray for us, *Good, sir, I beseech you let me have the benefit of your prayers to God for me*: Alas, if thou hast not a good conscience, all the prayers under heaven will not help thee. See Heb. 13. 18. *Brethren, pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience.* Mark; The Apostle telleth them they may pray for him with comfort, because he had a good conscience. As if he had said, *If we had not a good conscience, it were in vain for you to pray for us.* If ever God heare the prayers made for us, we must have a good conscience. Those that have not this good conscience shall never enter into the kingdome of heaven: Though they had Moses, Daniel, and Job to pray for them, yet all their prayers could not help them in the time of their distresse. 1. *Sam.* 28.20.

The bond of Conscience.

NOw wee must look back unto the foure Propositions which at the beginning I observed in the text I am upon;

1. That there is in every man a Conscience.
2. That the light which directeth conscience is knowledge.
3. That the bond which bindeth conscience is Gods law.
4. That the office of conscience is to bear witnesse, to accuse or excuse.

I have in the handling of these a little altered the method, and spake of the two first and the last. Now followeth the third, and that is consciences Bond, which is Gods law: *Which shew the worke of the law written in their hearts, &c.* It is onely the work of Gods law that it beareth witnesse of, that it accuseth or excuseth for: The law of God is conscience bond. Nevertheless we must here distinguish: The bonds of conscience are either primary and supreme, or secondarie and relative. The bond of conscience is Gods law.

1. The primarie and supreme bond of conscience is onely Gods word and law: that onely is the supreme bond of con-

Iam. 4. 12. ſcience : *There is one Law-giver, who is able to ſave or to deſtroy : who art thou that judgeſt another ?* that is, There is but one ſupreme Law-giver to bind the conſciences of men, and that is God. And the reaſon is given, Becauſe it is God onely who is able to ſave and to deſtroy. As if he had ſaid, God only hath power over life and death, either to ſave a man for ever, or deſtroy a man for ever, and to judge a man according to all that he hath done : and therefore he onely can make laws to bind the conſciences of men.

2. Now the ſecondarie or relative bond of conſcience is, when others who have authoritie from God to bind conſcience to this or that. I call this a relative bond, becauſe it is onely in relation to the authoritie of God. For though men cannot challenge any doings or omiſſions contrarie to their law to be ſinnes, yet if they have authoritie from God to command any thing, then they become beams and parts of Gods law, and do by virtue of that bind a mans conſcience.

This relative bond of conſcience is two-fold. Firſt, other men may bind our conſciences ; as Magiſtrates, and Maſters, and Parents, who though they cannot bind conſcience as they are men, yet when they have authoritie from God, their commands have Gods ſeals upon them, and do bind, I ſay, in relation to Gods law, which biddeth us obey them ; Rom. 13. 5. *Ye muſt needs be ſubject, not onely for wrath but alſo for conſcience ſake.* The Apoſtle there ſpeaketh of Magiſtrates ; and he telleth us that their laws bind our conſciences in relation to Gods, and therefore we muſt be ſubject unto them for conſcience ſake. Thus others may bind our conſciences. Secondly, we our ſelves may bind our own conſciences ; and that is by vows which we make unto God, or by our promiſes which we lawfully make unto men. The vows which we freely make unto God, theſe bind conſcience to keep them : Num. 30. 4. the vow of a woman is called *the bond wherewith ſhe hath bound her ſoul.* Mark ; ſhe bindeth her ſoul and her conſcience with it. So the promiſes which we lawfully make unto men, theſe alſo bind conſcience : For though before we promiſe it

it was in our own power, yet when we have promised we have bound our own consciences to the performance, because there is Gods seal upon it; Gods law commandeth us to be true of our words. These are relative bonds, bonds onely in relation to Gods law: Gods law is still the supreme bond of conscience. I will handle that first.

The law of God the prime bond of conscience

1. The law of God whereby he willeth and commandeth and forbiddeth this or that in his word, this is the main bond of conscience; When this bindeth it, nothing else can loose it; and contrary, if this loose it, nothing else can bind it. It so bindeth conscience as the observing and violating of it is that which maketh conscience clear or guilty before God. This is it which maketh a man a debtour; *I am a debtour*, Rom. 1. 14. saith Paul, *both to the Grecians and to the Barbarians*: That is, I am bound in conscience by Gods command to preach the Gospel unto both. This is it that denominateth a man to be bound: *I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem*; Acts 10. 22. that is, I knowing it to be Gods will am bound in conscience to go. This is that which layeth a necessity upon a man; *A necessity is laid upon me to preach*; 1. Cor. 9. 1. i. I am bound in conscience by Gods word so to do. This is that which layeth a kind of enforcement upon men; *We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*; Acts 4. 20. that is, If we should not, our consciences would flie in our faces: We are bound by Gods will to do so, and our consciences lay a charge upon us that we cannot go against it. The onely will and word of almighty God is that which supremely bindeth conscience.

Reasons

1. Because God onely knoweth the heart; he seeth our thoughts, and he onely can reach to the secrets of our spirits; and therefore he onely can bind our conscience. For who else can tell whether we make conscience of a thing yea or no? perhaps we do, perhaps we do not. Nor man nor angel can tell certainly: but God knoweth certainly, and he onely; and therefore he onely can bind our consciences. When the Lord doth command or forbid, the conscience is privy that God seeth it; and therefore now it is bound. *The word of God* Heb. 4. 12.

is

is quick and powerfull; it pierceth even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This bindeth a mans thoughts and intentions; he cannot be free in these: and the reason is given
vers. 13. by the Apostle; *All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* As if he had said, We are conscious of Gods all-seeing power; he seeth our hearts and our thoughts and all that is in us! and therefore his word doth bind us, yea it bindeth all our secrets: we cannot think a vain thought but our conscience will crie guilt before God, because our conscience doth know that God knoweth all. Besides, the conscience cannot fear any law but onely Gods law. Ye know when conscience is once in a doubt, it is fearfull, and beginneth to ask questions with it self *May I do this? or may*
1. Cor. 16 27. *I not do it? asking no questions for conscience sake.* The conscience when it doubteth useth to ask questions. Now this supposeth the law-giver to be able to see it: otherwise the conscience would not be thus afraid, if it were onely the commandment of a creature, that could not search the heart. So that here ye see one reason why Gods law is the supreme bond of conscience; Because no eye can see it but Gods.

2. Because God onely hath power over conscience: It is his commandment onely that makes any thing sinne or not sinne unto us. Augustine defineth sinne to be *A thought or word or deed, or lust against the commandment of God. Against*
Psal 51 4 *thee against thee onely have I sinned*, saith David. He saith he had sinned onely against God. *Why*? you will say *he sinned also against Bathsheba: Did not he commit adulterie? that was a sinne against Bathsheba: and murder? that was a sinne against Vriah.* True, he sinned against man relatively, in relation to the commandment which saith, *Thou shalt not injure thy neighbour*: but primarily and principally the sinne was against God. Conscience is like the kings servant, whom none can arrest or attach without leave from the king: so no man can bind conscience without leave had from God: for conscience is onely subject to his power: he onely hath power over conscience.

3. Because

3. Becauſe conſcience is Gods book. Now no creature can adde to Gods book or diminiſh from it. Ye may remember that dreadfull anathema at the end of Gods book; *If any man ſhall adde to this book, God ſhall adde to him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man ſhall diminiſh from this book, God ſhall take away his part out of the book of life.* Now conſcience is alſo Gods book wherein his law is written. Nay, conſcience is called *God law*: For it is ſaid, that *when the Gentiles which have not the law do the things contained in the law, they having not the law are a law unto themſelves*: that is, Their conſcience is Gods law, unto them. Like as the Bible conteineth Gods law for us Chriſtians, ſo did their conſciences contein the law of God to them: yea, to us Chriſtians much rather: For we are not to let Gods law be written onely in our Bibles, but we muſt get it written in our conſciences: our conſciences are to be Gods books wherein his laws are to be written. And therefore if it be a ſinne to adde a new law in the materiall book to bind men, then it muſt needs be a ſinne for any creature to put a new law into conſcience, which is the ſpirituall book of God. It is God onely who can write laws in this book: his book is above all the laws in the world; and none but God can put in and put out: and therefore none but he can bind conſcience. I ſpeak ſtill of this abſolute and ſupreme bond of conſcience. For Magiſtrates may bind relatively, but not as they are their laws, but by the law of God before made. This ye ſee the neceſſity of this truth, That Gods law is the abſolute and ſupreme bond of conſcience.

Rev. 1. 22. 18, 19.

Rom. 2. 14.

Vſes.

1. This ſerveth to direct Miniſters how to convince the conſciences of their people. If Miniſters deſire to worke upon their hearers, they muſt ſpeak to the conſcience; they muſt ſhew them Gods authority, that it is Gods will and Gods command. Tell conſcience never ſo much, that we ſhould do thus or thus upon other grounds and inducements, it ſtarteth

Vſe 1.

not at that, except it be convinced by the word of God that it is Gods will, the commandment of the great God of heaven, the God of the spirits of all flesh, who will look for our obedience: This maketh conscience to startle, this affecteth it and bindeth it. St. Paul when he said that he *approved himself and his preaching to mens consciences*, what followeth? *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that perish*, &c. As if he had said, This maketh all the world to startle, except they be reprobates and delivered over to Satan. It is easie to see what ministerie affecteth most and doth the most good in the hearts of the people; namely that which bringeth the cleerest voice of Gods Spirit calling to obedience and binding the conscience. They can heare with ease and great pleasure the sermons of those whose doctrines are stuffed with humane discourses. Nay, let carnall Preachers preach never so much against peoples sinnes, they can make a sport of it though they heare their sinnes with humane learning declaimed against. When the preacher doth not clearly preach the Lords voyce, though he rip up sinne, yet if it be not in the demonstration of the Spirit of God, and shewing his clear authority, the heart will not be affected. Conscience knoweth when it is bound, and when it is but dallied and jested with: And therefore if Ministers desire to have their ministerie worke upon the hearts of their people, they must shew them Gods authority, and confirm it by his word, and let them see that it is the commandment of the Lord, that which will one day judge them. *Let him know*, saith Paul, *that the things that I write are the commandments of the Lord.* It is the Lord of heaven and earth that biddeth thee yield, and commandeth thee to give over thy base lusts: It is he in whose hands thy breath is; thou hadst best be obedient. I tell thee, thy conscience observeth it; and if thou wilt not obey, it will rore like the roring of the sea one day against thee, and sting thee like a scorpion. The things that thou heareſt, know thou that they are the commandments of God: and if thou disobey, thou dost disobey not men but God.

2. Cor. 4 2.

1. Cor. 14. 37.

Use. 2. 2. Is it so that the word of God onely is the supreme bond of

of conscience? Then this teacheth us to have an eye to Gods word in that which we do, if we would satisfie conscience. I say, have an eye to Gods word: not onely to do that which it may be is in Gods word; conscience counteth that to be nothing: but to have an eye to Gods word. Conscience will not be satisfied with any obedience that we do if we have not an eye to Gods word. Whatever we have an eye to besides, conscience knoweth it is nothing, if in all we have not an eye to the commandment of God: Though we do obey it, conscience looketh upon it as if we did not obey it. It is onely Gods commandment and authoritie that bindeth conscience: and therefore nothing satisfieth conscience unlesse we have an eye unto that. If we do not aim at Gods will in doing what we do, conscience counteth our obedience as no obedience at all. As for example; Ye that are husbands, ye love your wives: but is it because God commandeth it? It may be ye love them because they love you, or because your affections are to them: Alas, this is nothing: Pagans and reprobates can do so. But do ye aim at the doing of Gods will, who commandeth you? O say you, *The Lord doth command me, I do it.* What of that? Do ye look at his commandment when ye do it? If not; be humbled, and know ye must get grace to do so, or ye are not obedient to God, neither will conscience set it down for obedience. Ye that are servants, ye serve your masters: but do ye aim at Gods will? thus, *O the Lord hath commanded me to be faithfull and painfull in my service.* Doth your soul look to this? It may be ye serve them because they are kind, and because they pay you your wages, and the like: This is nothing to conscience: conscience looketh at the commandment of God; and if your souls do not aim at the commandment of God, it will not satisfie conscience. Ye that are neighbours, it may be ye love one another, and be friends one with another: but doth your soul look at Gods commandment? is it because God hath commanded us to love one another? People seldome aim at God in these cases: They are friends with their neighbours: why? Their neighbours are friends

with them. But they do not trouble their thoughts to aim at Gods commandment in it. Let me tell you; Conscience will not count this obedience: For conscience feeleth no bond but Gods word: and if ye do not look at that, it is no obedience with conscience; conscience will never acquit you or absolve you for this; it accounteth of this obedience as no obedience at all. See 1. Cor. 10. 25. and so forward. There the Apostle handling that question of conscience, at last concludeth, *Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glorie of God*, vers. 31. Let your hearts look at that, and aim at that; in whatsoever ye do, still look at God: all is lost with conscience else. Though ye eat never so soberly, and drink never so moderately, pray never so duly, conscience counteth it all nothing if ye do not look at God: It is God onely and his word that doth bind it; and it will never give a discharge except your hearts look at him.

Vse 3.

3. This serveth to confute our Antinomists, such as say the law of God bindeth not the conscience of the regenerate. Ye see here that the law of God bindeth the conscience: and therefore if the regenerate have any conscience at all, (as certainly they have the best conscience of all men) then it must needs bind their conscience. We confesse the conscience of the regenerate is freed from many things by Christ. First, it is freed from the yoke and bondage of the ceremoniall law, Gal. 5. 1. *Stand fast in the libertie wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled with the yoke of bondage.* Every mans conscience is freed from that yoke of the ceremoniall law, because it ended in Christ. Secondly, the conscience of the regenerate is freed from seeking justification by the deeds of the law. Indeed the first covenant was by the works of the law; *He that doeth them shall live in them*: But the second covenant speaketh better things; *He that believeth shall be saved.* It is true, if God had not sent his Sonne we must have sought justification by the works of the law: Though it were impossible to find it by reason of our sinnes, yet conscience was bound that way. But now that Christ Jesus hath sealed up a new covenant in

Frō what Christians are freed.

in his own bloud, conscience is freed from that former: Rom. 3. 28. *Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* For though justifying faith never be without the sincere doing of the law, yet the deeds of the law have no influence into justification: Conscience is freed from seeking justification thereby. Thirdly, the conscience of the regenerate is freed from the rigour of the law. They are bound in conscience to use the law as a rule of their life, and in sinceritie to obey it; but are not bound by the gospel to the rigour of it: that they are freed from; and so they *are not under the law but under grace.* Rom 6.14. I grant that all carnall people, who are yet out of Christ, do all lie under the rigour of the law: and as long as they submit not to Jesus Christ, nor get into him, they are bound in conscience to keep it, though they cannot: They cannot sinne in one tittle, but conscience will condemne them before God. They shall be condemned for every vain thought, for every idle word, for every the least sinne, for every the least lust, for any the least omission of good. They lie under the rigour of the law, and they are bound in conscience to keep it, and they shall be countable for every transgression, because they are under the law. But the conscience of the regenerate is free from this rigour, because they are under grace, and therefore they are *delivered from the law*: Rom 7.6. The Lord hath delivered them by the body of Christ; and therefore they are not bound by the gospel to all that obedience that the law in rigour requireth. Fourthly, the conscience of the regenerate is freed from the curse of the morall law. For though the law doth condemne, yet their conscience needeth not fear it, because they are in Christ: *There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, which walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.* Rom 8 1. Indeed those that are not regenerate, not ingrafted into Christ, they are still in the mouth of the gunshot: the law doth condemne them, and they have no shelter, and their conscience is bound by it; and they shall find one day that by it their conscience will condemne them to hell. It may be now for the present their conscience is quiet, and they choke it, and so it letteth

them alone: yet they are condemned in conscience, and one day they shall find it. But the regenerate are by Christ freed in conscience from all this condemnation. Thus farre wee grant.

Antinomists. But the Antinomists and I know not what Marcionists would have more. They cannot abide to heare that a regenerate person is bound to any sincere obedience to Gods law as the rule of their life: They cry out against the morall law as once the Babylonians did against Jerusalem, *Down with it, down with it even to the ground: O yee do not preach Christ if yee talk of the Law.* Beloved, these are drunken opinions, fitter to be preached among Drunkards and Epicures, and monsters, then among the peculiar ones of God. The law of God doth bind the conscience of all the people of God, so that they are bound to make it a rule of life. Nay, the Scripture calleth it *Christs bond* whereby he bindeth his people to him: *The Kings of the earth set themselves, and the Rulers take counsell together against the Lord and against his Anointed saying, Let us break their bonds and cast away their cords from us. Tush, we will not be tyed by his laws, nor be so precisely strait-laced with such Commandments as these.* Here the laws of the Lord are called *bonds* and *cords*: Gods people are bound to him by them: But the wicked they stand out and refuse to be bound.

Psal. 2. 1, 2. 3.

Now if the Law be called a *bond*, I pray what bond is it, but of Conscience? It is not a bond like a Prisoners fetters, to be put about their legs: This is a spirituall bond that bindeth the conscience. But let me prove it to you by arguments. There be sundry arguments to prove it.

Arguments. That Gods law bindeth the conscience of the regenerate.

First, That which hath power to say to the conscience of the regenerate, *This is thy duty, and this must be done*, that bindeth the conscience. *This is your duty.* Who can tell better then Christ? *When yee have done all these things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.* Mark; Hee speaketh of Gods law, *things commanded*: now the law is nothing else but a catalogue of those things that God hath commanded us. *When yee*

Arg. 1. *Luk* 17. 10

have

have done all these things, saith our Saviour, *know it is your dutie*. Here ye see the law hath power to say to the conscience, *This is your dutie*. But ye will object, *We are under faith*; *and do ye tell us of law?* I answer, as Chrysostome answereth out of Paul, *Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: Yea, we establish the law*. See how the Apostle doth abhorre this thought: *God forbid*, saith he. As if he had said, *Farre be it from me to teach such an abominable doctrine: No, no; we establish the law*. Heare what Christ saith himself, *Think not that I am come to destroy the law: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill it*. O thought some. *If we believe in Christ then we hope we shall have done with the law. No, no*, saith Christ; *ye shall as soon pull the heavens and the earth out of their place as disannull one tittle of the law*. Rom. 3. 31.

Secondly, That which hath this authoritie that the breach of it is a sinne, bindeth conscience: but the law hath this authoritie, that neither regenerate nor unregenerate can transgresse it, but they sinne: therefore the law bindeth their consciences. For the regenerate and all are bound in conscience to take heed of sinne: *Whosoever committeth sinne transgresseth also the law*. David was a regenerate man; yet when he had defiled Bathsheba, *I have sinned*, saith he. Joseph was a regenerate man; yet confesseth, if he should sinne: *How shall I do this great wickednesse, and so sinne against God?* But ye will object, This is old Testament. What of that? I hope you will not take up the old damned heresie again of the Cerdonians, and Caimites, and Apellites, and Manichees, and Severians, and other such cursed hereticks condemned by the Church of God: Their heresie was, To hedge out the regenerate from the old testament. And St. Augustine proved it against them, That the morall law of God was over the rule of obedience, and shall so continue with the gospel to the end of the world; and every transgression thereof is sinne. The breach of the ceremoniall law was a sinne once; but now it is not: because once it bound the conscience; now it doth not: But the breach of the morall law is still sinne: therefore still it bindeth the conscience Arg. 2. 1. Iohn 3 4.

ence. Do ye not remember what St. James saith now under the Gospel? he presseth it yet on mans consciences: *He that*
Iam. 2. 11. *said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now though thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressour of the law.* And though yee may call it *a law of liberty* in what sense ye please, yet hee telleth you, Ye had best look to your words and deeds: for ye must be judged by this law of liberty: *So speak ye and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.*

Arg. 3. Thirdly, That which being observed doth cause the conscience of the regenerate to excuse, and being transgressed to accuse, that bindeth their conscience: (For what else do you make *binding* of conscience but this?) But the law of God being observed doth cause the conscience to excuse; being transgressed, to accuse; *In many things we sinne all*, saith the Apostle Mark. Our consciences, do accuse us: as we do so. *I am a sinfull man*, saith St. Peter, Luke 5. 8. His conscience did accuse him of sinne.

Arg. 4. Fourthly, That which is the condition of Gods covenant of grace bindeth the conscience, yea of the regenerate: but sincere obedience to Gods law is a condition of Gods covenant of grace. See Luke 1. 72. *To remember his holy covenant, and the oath that he sware that he would give us, That being delivered out of the hands of our enemies we might serve him without fear in holinesse and righteousnesse before him all the dayes of our life.* Mark; Sincere and universall obedience is a condition of the covenant of grace, not onely for a manifestation to our selves that we are truly justified; as these upstart Patritians do hold: but it is the condition of the covenant of grace. Every covenant hath its conditions annexed; and therefore it is called *the book of the covenant*, Exod. 24. 7. *the words of the covenant*, Exod. 34. 28. *the tables of the covenant*, Deut. 9. 11. The reason is this; Because when a covenant is made, the conditions are put into a book or a table and expressed in words. Onely here is the difference between the first covenant of works and the second covenant of grace: Both have

have conditions; but here, I say, is the difference; In the one grace giveth the covenant, and grace giveth the condition of the covenant; but a condition is annexed though: Now hence we may argue (and none but enemies to the Gospel can denie it) If the covenant of grace do bind a mans conscience, then certainly the condition of the covenant bindeth a mans conscience too: But the covenant of grace bindeth the conscience of the regenerate; and therefore the condition of it bindeth. If you ask, What is this to obedience? the answer is, That obedience is the condition of the covenant of grace, as the fore-named Scripture expresseth, Luke 1.72. Thus ye see the law of God bindeth the conscience of all the regenerate. This is the third Use.

Use 4.

4. Hath the word of God supreme power to bind conscience? Then hence we may learn, that no creature can dispense with it, nor free conscience from guilt when a man transgresseth the word. What a damned usurpation is it in the Pope to offer to dispense? The Canonists say he may dispense *de præceptis veteris & novi testamenti*, (They are their own words) *he may dispense with the commandments of the old and new testament.* He dispensed with king Henry the eighth, and undertook to free his conscience from guilt though he married his own brothers wife. Gregorie the second undertook to free subjects from being bound in their consciences to keep their oaths of allegeance to Leo the Emperour. O these are damned aspirings; and they plainly declare him to be Antichrist, who exalteth himself in this manner. The word of God is the supreme binder of conscience: And therefore not all the Angels in heaven can dispense with one idle word. *For ever, O Lord thy word is settled in heaven,* Gods word is settled for ever in heaven; and therefore ye may assoon remove the heaven from its place as one tittle of the word from binding conscience. Doth the word say thus or thus? thou hadst best do it: If thou wilt not all the whole world cannot help thee; thy conscience will condemne thee at the day of judgement without remedie. Hath the word convinced thee of thy sinnes, and made thy conscience

Azorius the Jesuite reports it.

Psal. 119. 89.

say, *I am a sinner, and am guiltie before God*? I tell thee then, Thy conscience is bound, and all the world cannot loose it. But hast thou been humbled and emptied of thy self, and doth the word pronounce pardon of thy sinnes in Christs name, that thy conscience can say, *The Lord speaketh peace to my soul*? I tell thee, Thou art loosed, and nor hell nor devil nor sinne nor flesh nor any thing can bind thee. Ye may see the power of Gods word in that speech of our Saviour, *What soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven*, Matth. 18. 18. That is, My word which ye preach is of that nature, that if that loose your conscience, it is loosed indeed, and nothing can bind it; if that do bind it, it is bound soundly indeed, and nothing can loose it. O this is a terrour to the wicked! Doth the word of God say, *He that hardneth his neck, being often rebuked, shall suddenly be destroyed, and cannot be cured*? O fear and tremble ye that harden your necks against the reproofs of the Almightie: his word bindeth over your consciences to Christs barre. Doth the word say, *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*? If thou beest such an one, thy conscience is bound with this word, and it will apply it to the soul before the tribunal-seat of Christ. Doth the word crie out against any of thy courses? thy conscience is bound as with chains, and it is not all thy vain hopes and excuses can loose thee. Again, this is comfort to the godly: Gods word is the supreme binder of conscience. O ye blessed of the Lord, the word of God tieth such a fast knot to your comforts that all hell cannot open it with their teeth: The word of the Lord Jesus is with you, *who hath the key of David, that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth*. Yea, but sayest thou, *My sinnes are against me*: What then? mark what the word saith, *We have an Advocate with the Father*: Thy conscience is bound to believe that. *Yea, but I have a very naughtie heart, and I cannot tell what to do with it*: Mark what the word saith; *Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved*: This bindeth thy conscience. *But I offend dayly*: Mark still what the word saith; *Christ bringeth in everlasting righteousnesse*. If thou beest unworthy to day

Prov. 29. 1.

Dan. 9 24.

day, there is righteousnesse for thee to day; if unworthy to morrow, there is righteousnesse for thee to morrow; if unworthy for ever. This is Gods word, and thy portion; this bindeth thy conscience to lay hold on it. *But I have abundantly sinned*: What saith Christs word? *I will abundantly pardon.* O what comfort is this to every poore soul which the Lord Jesus hath humbled? His word is the supreme binder of conscience, above the law, above justice, above threatnings, above all the world besides. His promising word is the supreme binder of thy conscience, if thou beest one of Christs: And therefore fear not; onely believe, and be thankfull, and give glory to God. This is the childrens bread; no stranger can intermeddle with it.

The secondary bond of conscience.

YE have heard that the bonds of conscience are of two sorts: First, there is a supreme bond of conscience, and that is Gods word: of which I have already spoken. Secondly, there is a relative bond of conscience, which bindeth conscience, indeed, but it is onely in relation to Gods word, because Gods word putteth authority upon it. And this latter is also of two sorts: 1. Others may bind conscience; 2. We our selves may bind our own consciences.

1. Others may bind our consciences.

1. Others may bind our consciences, namely, when they have authority conferred upon them from God, and so their laws and commands receive vigour and force from Gods laws. Thus the laws and commands of Magistrates bind the conscience of People; of Parents bind the conscience of Children; of Masters bind the conscience of Servants: For though they do not bind conscience as they are the commandments of men, yet having Gods seal and authority upon them they do. I will set down some conclusions whereby ye may know how farre the laws and commandments of others bind or not bind conscience.

1. *Concluſion.*

1. Magiſtrates have power to command us. *Let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers : for there is no power but on God; and the powers that be are ordained of God*, Rom. 13. 1. That chapter doth moſt clearly prove this concluſion unto us.

Out of the firſt part of the chapter we learn, 1. That Magiſtrates have power and authority to make laws, and to eſtabliſh orders among men; and therefore they are called *powers*: 2. We learn that theſe laws of Magiſtrates receive ſtrength and force from the law of God : *For the powers that be are ordained of God*, ſaith the text. 3. Thoſe laws made by the Magiſtrate and confirmed by God have power to bind conſcience, verſ. 5. *Wherefore we muſt be ſubject not onely becauſe of wrath but alſo for conſcience ſake.* And the violating of them is ſinne. When their authority is confirmed by God, we cannot *reſiſt them* but we *reſiſt the ordinance of God*, ſaith the Apoſtle : nay, we may pull *condemnation upon us* if we do; *They that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves condemnation*, verſ. 2. So that this firſt concluſion telleth us what laws of men are to be obeyed; *viz.* 1. Such as do virtually flow from Gods word, though not expreſſely commanded in it ; 2. Such as are good and wholeſome and profitable for the common-wealth : Theſe though they are not particularly commanded in Gods word, yet are they by virtue of it injoyned : and therefore to neglect them and be diſobedient unto them, is to neglect and be diſobedient to God. Again, ſo farre onely are they to be obeyed (ſo farre onely, I ſay) as they virtually do flow from Gods word : for ſo farre onely they receive force from Gods law. This is the firſt concluſion.

2. *Concluſion.*

2. The commandments of Magiſtrates and thoſe that are in authoritie loſe their power of binding the conſcience in foure caſes :

1. When

1. When they command that which though in it self it be not simply and absolutely sinfull and unlawfull, yet it doth put us upon a necessity of sinning: As for example, If a Magistrate command single life to all Ministers, this thing is not in it self simply unlawfull (for it is lawfull to marry, and it is lawfull not to marry) yet this commandment is unlawfull, because it would put Ministers upon a necessity of sinning: The reason is, because all have not this power. And therefore such a commandment as this would not bind conscience: For the conscience cannot be bound to impurity, or an apparent danger of impurity: and therefore though the thing be not simply unlawfull, yet the commandment is simply unlawfull, and doth not bind conscience. The Apostle maketh such commandment to argue a seared conscience in the commander: and therefore none but a seared conscience can think it is bound by it, 1. Tim. 4. 2, 3,

2. The commandments of Magistrates lose their power of binding the conscience when they command things that are unlawfull in themselves and contrary to the word of God. In this case they do not bind conscience, because Gods seal is not on them. We have an example of this in the three blessed children; Who when the king commanded them to worship the Image that he had set up, they did not conceive themselves bound in conscience to obey: they would rather suffer torment then obey it. So also Daniel, when he was commanded not to ask any petition of God for thirty dayes space, but onely of the king, Daniel did not conceive himself bound in conscience, nay he chose rather to be cast into the den of Lions then obey. In this case the answer of the Apostles is necessary; who when they were commanded not to preach any more in the name of the Lord Jesus, thus they answered, *Whether it be right in the sight of God to obey men rather then God, judge ye.* Dan. 3. 16. Dan. 8. 16

3. When mens laws and commands overthrow the libertie of Christianitie, that Christian libertie which Christ hath purchased for us then they lose their power of binding the conscience. But here I must tell you of a caution; *viz.* That this

this libertie may be considered in a double respect: 1. In regard of it self, the libertie it self; 2. In regard of the exercise or use of this libertie. Now there is a very great difference between these two considerations; as there is a great difference between a mans having a sword and a mans wearing a a sword. The Magistrate may restrain a man from wearing a sword at such or such a time, though he do not take his sword from him: so there is difference betweene the having our libertie and the using our libertie. There is a libertie purchased for Gods children, whereby all things are become lawfull unto them: *All things are lawfull unto me*, saith Paul 1. Cor. 6. 12. Rom. 14. 14. *and there is nothing evil in it self*: (he speaketh of indifferent things.) Gods children are freed from the observation of meats, and drinks, and times, and garments. Now whatsoever commandment is made by the Magistrate contrarie to this libertie doth not bind conscience: for nothing can bind conscience when Christ doth loose it: Yet there may be a restraint of the use of this libertie: as for example, the Magistrate may command us to forbear some kinds of meats at some certain times; and so also for garments, and the like: namely, when the doctrine about meats and drinks and garments is pure. And therefore in such a case the command of the Magistrate bindeth the conscience; otherwise not.

4. When they command things indifferent to be absolutely necessary, to make them Idolatrous or superstitious, then in this case they are unlawfull and bind not the conscience to obey them. But when are they idolatrous? I answer; 1. When they are commanded eyther as absolutely necessary to Christianity, to the very being of religion and the worship of God, and with as much necessity as holinesse it self then they are made superstitious and idolatrous: And in this case the caveat of St. 1. John 5. 21. John is strongly to be kept, *Babes, keep your selves from Idols.* 2. When they are commanded as things meritorious, as pleasing to God for themselves, and to merit of him, then they are idolatrous. 3. When they are commanded for the substantiall perfection of Religion, as though religion were imperfect without

out them, then they are made Idolatrous, and lose their vittue of binding the conscience. But all such commands of things that are indifferent, which are commanded without respect to make them idolatrous, they may be obeyed. This is our second conclusion.

3. *Conclusion.*

3. Those laws and commandments of Magistrates which want the authority of Gods law to confirm them (and therefore bind not the conscience) ought not to be disobeyed for all that with scandall or contempt and by unreverent slighting or despising the Magistrate or his laws. He must be acknowledged a Magistrate under God for all that: 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2. *I exhort that supplication be made for Kings and those that are in authority.* He speaketh there of heathen Kings; yet hee calleth them *Kings*, and saith they *have authority*: and wee ought to pray for them: and therefore how much more when Kings and Magistrates subscribe to Christian religion? Nay, though they command that which is utterly unlawfull, wee must not rise up against them: for if we do, we rise up against God. We must obey them one way or other, either actively or passively: When they command that which is lawfull for us to do, we must obey them by doing: when they command that which is unlawfull for us to do, and threaten punishment, then wee cannot actively obey them by doing, because they command against God; yet we must passively obey by suffering and submitting to their penalties, because the Lord hath given them authority over us. This is our third conclusion.

4. *Conclusion.*

4. Those laws of Magistrates which by Gods law do not bind conscience, do yet in matter of scandall bind us to obedience. If the Magistrate shall command any thing beyond his power to command yet not unlawfull for us to do, though such a command do not bind to obedience in case of conscience, yet in case of scandal it doth. Thus Christ was content to pay

tribute

Matth. 17. tribute though hee needed not to have done it : *The children*, saith he, *are free* : nevertheless, lest he should offend the Magistrate, he did pay it. I will put an example of another nature; In a private wrong, though wee are not expresly bound to it, yet rather then scandalously to contend, conscience doth bind us to yeeld. Needed *Abraham* to have condiscended so farre unto *Lot* as to let him take his choice before him ? No rather then scandal of Religion should arise, ye may reade that he did it. Thus I have briefly made it manifest how farre the commands of the Magistrate do not bind conscience, and how farre they do.

Objections.

Obj. 1. 1. But it may be objected; Conscience hath onely relation to God.

Answ. I answer, It is true, as the supreme and absolute binder of conscience : but it hath a relation also unto men in the second place, inasmuch as God putteth upon men such terms as conscience hath relation to, Acts 24. 16. *Herein I always endeavoured my self, to have always a clear conscience both towards God and towards men.* Mark; Conscience hath relation to both : For though it have its main relation to God and his word, yet in him it hath no relation unto men.

Obj. 2. 2. Again it may be replied; The Magistrates do not undertake, nor can they, to meddle with mens invisible spirits; for they are not able to see whether the spirit of man be obedient or no : and therefore how do their laws bind us in conscience. The Magistrate onely looketh at the body : mens thoughts and affections and consciences are naked onely to God.

Answ. It is true, the Magistrate doth not undertake but only to bind the outward man : nevertheless the conscience of the subject feeleth it self to be bound to obedience under pain of sinning against God, who giveth this generall precept. *Submit your selves to every ordinance of man for the Lords sake, to the King, &c.* The conscience feeleth this, and so it cometh to be bound.

1 Pet. 2. 13

Obj. 3. 3. Again it may be replied; The conscience is bound but onely

onely by way of religion. If I make conſcience of a thing, then I make a matter of religion of it: but what religion is there in the commandments of Magiſtrates? Suppoſe the Magiſtrate commandeth us to get our armour in readineſſe, to mend our high-wayes, to moderate expenſes at nuptials, or the like; theſe are civill things and not religious, and therefore how can they bind conſcience? We make conſcience only of religion and the worſhip of God.

Anſw. Such laws do not bind conſcience under the name of religion, but under the name of civill diſcipline. And again, though they do not bind conſcience *per ſe* and immediately, yet they do *per aliud* and as ſubjoyned to an higher law. For though the breach of ſuch laws be onely a civil fault in it ſelf, yet in another reſpect it may be a morall ſinne, if the powers that are ordained of God be neglected and diſobeyed. And therefore though the conſcience do not regard civil laws as they are civil; neither do we make conſcience of them as they are civil: yet as they are made by the Miniſter of God, and backed by his authoritie which the Lord hath ſet on them, ſo they do take hold of conſcience; and not to perform them is contrarie to juſtice and charitie and the profit and ſafetie of the Common-wealth, and ſo a ſinne.

Vſes.

Vſe 1. 1. This confuteth the Anabaptiſts, who denie that any obedience is to be given to the ſecular power. Ye ſee here that the laws of Magiſtrates have Gods ſeal upon them; and therefore we muſt yield obedience unto them: for they bind in conſcience. Again, this confuteth the Papiſts, who teach that their Popes laws and commandments are of ſupreme authoritie, and require equall ſubmiſſion of ſpirit with Gods laws: and alſo that the omiſſion of them is death and damnation. Our doctrine and religion goeth between both: For we teach that Gods authoritie is onely ſupreme, and that he onely can make laws under pain of death and damnation; and that the authoritie of Magiſtrates is ſecondarie, and ſecondarie obedience is to be

given unto them. The Papists speak blasphemie in saying their Pope can make laws under pain of damnation to be kept: Our Saviour Christ maketh this a propertie onely of God; *Fear not him that can kill the bodie, and there is all that he can do: but fear him who can cast both bodie and soul into hell: I say unto you, Fear him,* Luke 12. 4. As if he had said, Men can reach no further then the bodie, and their punishments can go no further then the death of the bodie.

Vse 2. 2. This teacheth us what to do if men should command any thing which is unlawfull for us to perform: (Suppose there should be any such humane commands as are repugnant to Gods.) In this case ye see we must obey God rather then mens; nay, suffer losse of goods, losse of libertie, yea losse of life, rather then obey the commandments of men, in case they be contrarie to the commandments of God. Ye may reade a lamentable example in Ephraim; They were utterly destroyed for obeying their King rather then their God: The King commanded to worship the calves, and to go unto Bethel and not to Jerusalem to worship: they yielded to his commandment, and did so; O thought they, *We shall displease the King if we do not.* For this sinne of theirs they were broken in judgement, Hos. 5. 11. *Ephraim is destroyed and broken in judgement, because he willingly walked after the commandment.* Beloved, Gods commandment is sovereigne, and the supreme binder of conscience: Whatever commandment is repugnant to Gods word, wo to us if we do it; nay, though it be to save our goods or our lives. It is true, we must *give to Cesar the things that are Cesars*; but so as withall we must be sure to *give to God the things that are Gods.*

Vse 3. 3. This comforteth Gods people against the calumnies and slanders of wicked and ungodly men that upbraid them for their obedience to God. O say they, *Ye irregular and despisers of authoritie.* I say, this is comfort to the godly, that God is able to bear them out in obeying him rather then men. Gods word is the supreme binder of conscience; and therefore, whatever men think of such, they are absolutely bound to obey God.

It

If men command us againſt the word of God, we know their authoritie is the ordinance of God; and therefore if they go beyond that, they do not bind us in conſcience. If God had not bound us in conſcience to him, others might have taken it ill if we ſhould not obey them: but now what cauſe have others to think ill of us? What folly were it in us to ſeek to pleaſe men and to diſpleaſe God? If we were at libertie, then we might chooſe whom we would obey: but now we are bound unto God, and muſt be obedient unto God, whatever men command to the contrarie, let us do it therefore with chearfulneſſe. By this we ſhew our ſubmiſſion to God; by this we ſatisfie conſcience, which being bound unto God doth continually urge us to obey him. Why ſhould we omit part of the exactneſſe of our obedience which the word of God doth require? We have more to do then ever we ſhall be able to perform: we ſhould therefore be carefull to do all that we may. By our obedience to God in this kind we convince the conſcience of others of our uprightneſſe towards God: Though through the over-ruling dominion of their luſts & paſſions they rage at us, and their mouths ſpeak evil of us, yet we may have an evidence in their conſciences within which may teſtifie for us: their conſciences will whiſper with them, *Surely they do well to pleaſe God rather then men*: their conſciences will be on our ſide, though their actions and tongues be againſt us. We have a notable example of this Acts 4. 15, 16. When the rulers of the Jews had threatned the Apoſtles, and had reviled them with many bitter words, and had bidden them go aſide for a while, then they concluded among themſelves, *Surely an evident ſigne is done by them, and we cannot deny it*: So that their conſciences acquitted them for good men. So when the wicked of this world have ſpoken evil of the wayes of the righteous, and blaſphemed the holy name after which they are named: yet when they are alone, and their conſciences at counſel within themſelves, then they conclude, *Indeed they do well.* Thus their conſciences give a good evidence of us, and accuſe them for not doing the like. And

thus much shall suffice to be spoken of other means binding of conscience.

II. We may bind our own consciences.

II. We our selves may bind our own consciences: And that is by those vows and promises which we make to God of any thing lawfull and in our power. Those vows and promises which we make unto God according to the warrant of his word they do bind our conscience. They are our own before we have made them: as Ananias and Saphira their gift was their own before they vowed it to the Church: *While it remained was it not thine own? and when it was sold, was it not in thine own power?* Acts 5. 4. We need not vow unlesse we will: but after we have vowed our vows are Gods bonds, and do bind the conscience to the performance of them. Nay, we *lie unto God*, as the text saith they did, if we do not stand to the performance of them.

But it may be demanded, What vows are they which are unlawfull, and do not bind conscience? I answer?

1. Such as we make of things impossible and beyond our power: These are unlawfull, and do not bind conscience.

2. Such as we make of things unlawfull; when we vow to do that which is contrarie to Gods law: such as Davids
1. Sam. 25. 22. was when he vowed the destruction of Nabals familie: This doth not bind conscience: nay, we are bound in conscience to break it.

3. Such as though they be of things lawfull and possible, yet we want freedome in the performance of them: as for a wife or a servant or a child to make a vow, when their relation to such as are over them will not suffer them to perform it:
Num. 30. 3 This bindeth not conscience. Nothing bindeth conscience but that which hath Gods seal upon it: but this hath not Gods seal on it; and therefore it doth not bind conscience: indeed it bindeth us in conscience to repent of it.

4. Such as though they be lawfull and profitable and in our own freedome, yet if there fall a greater consequence before the

the time of performance, we are not bound in conſcience to perform them: as if a man upon the receit of ſome mercie ſhould in teſtimonie of his thankfulneſſe vow a hundred pounds to good uſes, in the mean time his eſtate ſo decayeth as that he ſhall undo himſelf and his familie if he perform it; this is ſo great a conſequence, and contingently hapned, that it freeth his conſcience from performing what he had vowed: Or if a man ſhould promiſe marriage to a woman, and before the time of nuptials ſhe be found unchaſt; this is a farre greater conſequence, and he is not bound in conſcience to marry her. Theſe kinds of vows do not bind in conſcience: But all other do bind us.

1. *Vſe*; We may learn from hence never to vow but with good judgement and counſel. For either we muſt keep our promiſe, or not: If we muſt, that is a ſigne it is good, and therefore had need of deliberation: If we muſt not keep it then it is a ſigne of raſhneſſe and inconſiderateneſſe; and beſides it may prove ſcandalous and offenſive to them to whom we make it, and alſo to them that ſhall heare of it: And therefore it requireth good judgement and adviſe to vow. What a raſh vow was that of good Jephthah? *If thou wilt deliver Ammon into my hand, whatſoever meeteth me I will offer it for a burnt-offering.* How if a dog had firſt met him? what a ſinne had it been? How if his daughter? what a thing had that been? And indeed it proved to be his daughter. Vows without judgement do but increaſe our ſinnes and aggravate our tranſgreſſions againſt God. Iudges 11 30.

2. *Vſe*; This teacheth us to keep our good vows whatſoever they be that we make. Indeed it is hard to keep a good, yea it is hard to make a good vow in that manner as we ſhould: It requireth a great deal of faith and ſelf-denial, and humility and ſtrength of reſolution: But when we have made it, our ſin is the greater if we do not then keep it; *Better it is not to vow then that thou ſhouldſt vow and not pay. Haſt thou vowed a vow? then deferre not to pay it: God hath no pleaſure in fools.* As if the holy Ghoſt had ſaid, *It is the part of a fool to vow before he conſider* Eccleſ. 5. 5

consider and be absolutely resolved to perform, to be off and be with the Lord God of hosts: The Lord hath no pleasure in fools: Therefore pay all thy good vows, and be humbled for thy rash vows. But we are fallen into bad times, when truth and equity is perished from among men; Every one is a deceitfull bow: yea, the best (almost) is a briar: Nothing so common as vows and promises; but few make conscience of performing them. Nay, men are careless of their grand vow which they have made unto God in their Baptisme. O this is a very fearfull sin!

Baptisme. Ye have all made a vow unto God in your baptisme that ye would live otherwise then ye do, and ye make no conscience to keep it. Baptisme is a very weighty thing: If there were no other thing to bind you to holiness and obedience and faith but onely the vow ye entred into in your Baptisme, did ye consider what a vow it is, it would move you alone. It is said of Apollos, Acts 18. 25. that he was *fervent in spirit* though he *knew nothing but the baptisme of John:* Apollos considered what a vow he had made unto God in his baptisme, that, though he knew nothing else, it made him zealous for God. Baptisme is a very great binder of conscience: It bindeth a man to believe, and to go out of himself, and to submit to Jesus Christ. The wicked Pharisees saw this to be true: Matth. 21. 25. *If wee shall say that Johns baptisme was from heaven, he will say, Why did ye not then believe?* Beloved, was not your baptisme from heaven? Was it not an ordinance of God? and did ye not solemnly then vow unto God? Why then do ye not believe? Why do ye not deny your selves, your works, your wayes, and take up Christs crosse? As Christ saith of John Baptist, Matth. 11. 11. *Among them that are born of women there hath not been a greater then John the Baptist*; so may I say of bonds and of vows and covenants. Among all the vows and covenants that ever were made, there hath not been a greater then this of Baptisme: And therefore ye had best look to the performing of what ye then vowed: If ye do not, ye are grievous breakers of covenant with God; which sinne will surely stand against you for evil. It is most certain, that Baptisme doth greatly bind us in conscience to walk answerably to it in all righte-

righteouſneſſe and true holineſſe : And we can never be ſaved (though we are Baptiſed) except wee can anſwer with a good conſcience that we live as we vowed in our Baptiſme : 1 Pet. 3. 21. *The like figure whereunto, even Baptiſme, doth alſo now ſave us; not the putting away of the filth of the fleſh, but the anſwer of a good conſcience towards God.* Mark; Unleſſe we can anſwer with a good conſcience, that we live according to our promiſes in it, our Baptiſme cannot ſave us. I pray, conſider that ſpeech of St. Paul; *We are buried with Chriſt by Baptiſme into his death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſſe of life.* Rom. 6. 4. Mark; There is the vow that we made unto God in our Baptiſme : And the Apoſtle there telleth us we are bound in conſcience to keep this vow; otherwiſe we had better have been without our Baptiſme. Do not think that God will be mocked : Ye are content to go for Chriſtians : but if yee be Chriſtians, conſider ye are under a great vow; and if ye do not keep it, Gods covenant hath a quarrel againſt you, and ye ſhall be broken in judgemene. There is no ſinne that ye live in, no luſt that your conſcience telleth you hath entertainment in your hearts, but it is ſacramentall perjury againſt the vow that ye made unto God in your Baptiſme. Are ye dead to good duties? Ye vowed in yont Baptiſme ye would not be ſo. Do yee not daily mortifie and ſubdue your affections? Ye vowed in your Baptiſme ye would. Do ye not daily fight againſt ſinne and the fleſh, like the faithfull ſouldiers of Chriſt? Ye vowed in Baptiſme ye would. What a horrible perjurie is this? Nay, it is worſe : it is a ſacramentall perjurie. When the Apoſtles ſaw any ſinne in the people, preſently they tell them of Baptiſme : as if they ſhould ſay, *Do ye live thus and thus, when ye vowed the contrarie in your Baptiſme?* When there were diviſions in Corinth; Some would be of Cephas, and ſome of Apolles, and ſome of Paul : Paul then telleth them of their Baptiſme; *Were yee baptized in the name of Paul?* 1. Cor. 1. 13. As if he had ſaid, *I pray, conſider how contrary this is unto your Baptiſme: Ye were baptized into Chriſt; and are yee thus divided among*

among your selves? So when there was corruption crept into the people of Galatia, St. Paul telleth them of their Baptisme:

Gal. 3. 27. *As many of you,* saith he, *as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* As if he had said, *This corruption of yours is contrarie to your Baptisme: Ye were baptized into Christ, and yee have vowed to put on Christ; and do yee yield to such corruptions as these?* So also when there was want of love and unitie and affection between one another among the Ephesians, St. Paul telleth them of their Baptisme: O saith he,

Ephes. 4. 5. *There is one God, one faith, one baptisme.* As if he should say, *This is contrarie to your baptisme: Ye were all baptized with one baptisme; and do not yee live in peace? and is there not unitie of spirit one with another among you? What? and were all baptized with one baptisme?* Beloved, ye never do that which is not good but ye go clean contrarie to your Baptisme. What? were ye baptized into Christ, and do thus? Baptized into Christ and pray thus? Baptized into Christ, and heare the word of Christ thus? Serve God no better then thus? Your Baptisme bindeth you in conscience against every sinne and every evil way: O let us take it to heart and consider it.

FINIS.